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HOUSE OF **CATS**

CATHLEEN ROOTSAERT
AND HER FELINES
TAKE OVER TEATRO
—FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS,
ANYWAY [DAVID BERRY / 23]

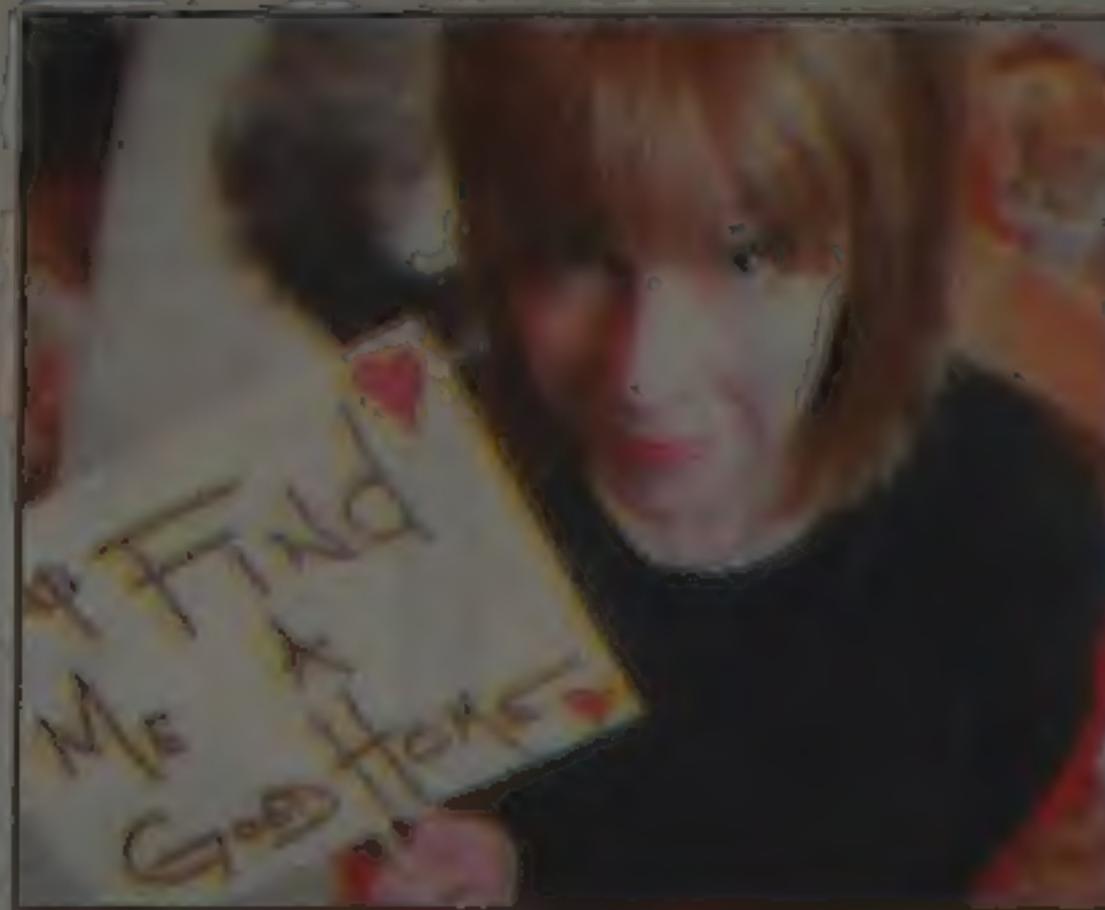
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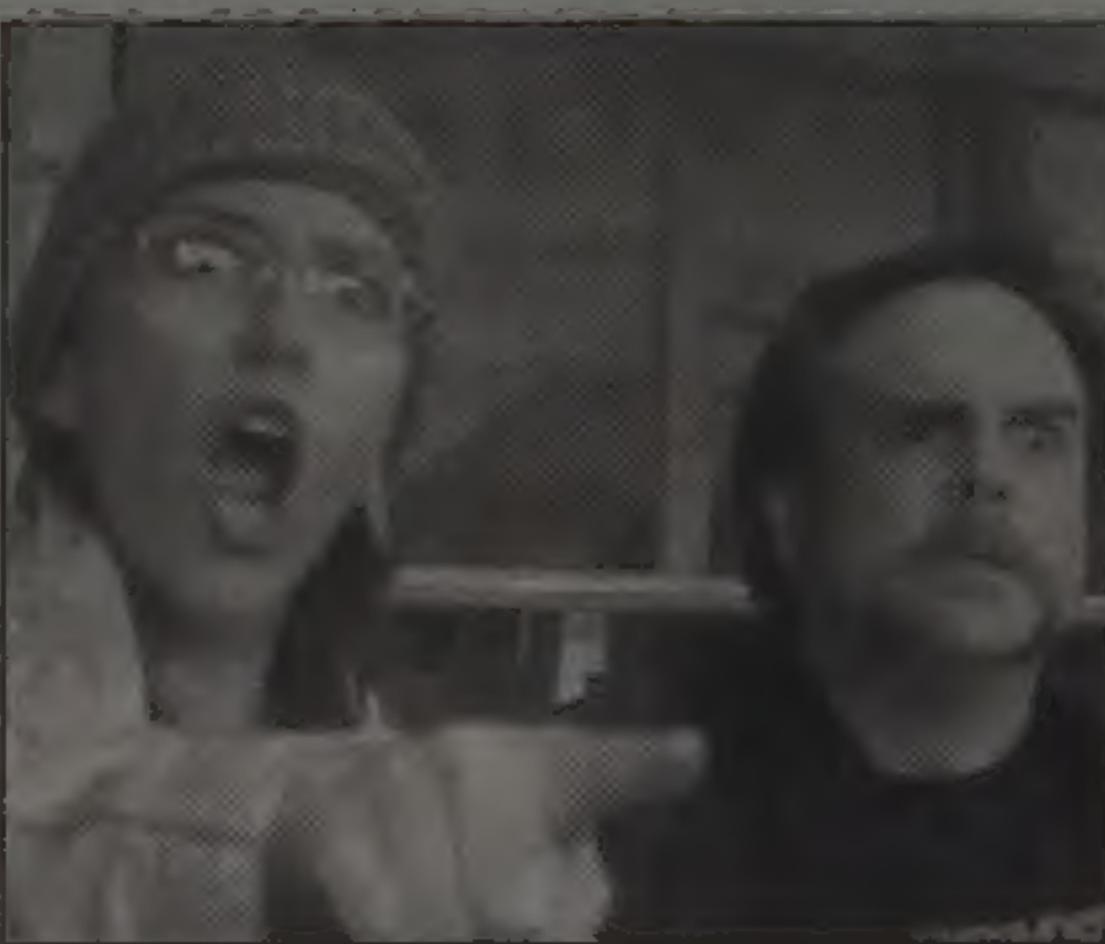
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"Really, though, most people who have a cat have more than one, but at what point does it become crazy? Is 10 cats too many? Or is that acceptable?" —Cathleen Rootsart, local playwright

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"You can heat the house with four toasters at minus 32." —Gordon Howell, electrical engineer and Riverdale Net Zero Energy Project team member

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"I just can't believe some of the stories the two of them have been telling me. It's not even the players, really—some of the things parents said. I have no idea how kids get through some of that." —Sharla Matkin, local actor

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"It was another thing like, hey, I'm Betti Forde, you're Jenni Craig. We're bangers. And what do bangers have? Camel Toes!" —MC/DJ Betti Forde (aka Maren Hancock), Vancouver musician

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WTO tackles farm subsidies ... again

ANDREW CISAKOWSKI / cisa@vneweekly.com

After passing another self-imposed deadline for completion of the "Doha Development Agenda" six months ago, the World Trade Organization is again holding talks about making it easier for poor and rich countries to trade with each other.

This revival is not, as per usual, a result of big business lobbyists, but is because of the will of the world's poorest nations—all 50 countries considered "least developed" refuse to engage in any more talks unless Doha's main target, agriculture, is on the table.

Doha aimed to eliminate all tariffs and quotas on exports from the 50 least developed nations while also eliminating a majority of agricultural subsidies in all other countries. But it is no simple task going after the oldest and most protected industry in the world: the European Union spends an amazing \$47 billion (America spends \$22 billion) or 40 per cent of its entire budget on agricultural subsidies while only 2 per cent of the labour force occupies itself in farming.

But perhaps most importantly, success has not come because the usual catalysts are sitting this round out. Previous trade rounds, such as Uruguay in 1994, have been successful because exporters, eager for access to new markets, pressured their governments to open up home markets. This time, those with the most to gain, the least developed nations, wield the least amount of lobbying power and often have their desires told to them.

The World Bank estimates that if the agricultural industry were completely freed of all tariffs and subsidies, income in developing countries would rise by \$86 billion and 30 million people would be pulled out of extreme poverty by 2015. Much of this benefit would be in sub-Saharan Africa, a region that has been largely left out of global economic expansion.

Even though Doha's original lofty aims now appear unachievable, something is still better than nothing. And after years of dubious (at best) results of WTO policies for the extremely poor, this change in tune was very welcome. But if rich countries in the West refuse to re-examine their agricultural subsidy regimes, sadly real change seems increasingly far away. ▶

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10303 - 108 Street, Edmonton, AB T5J 1L7

T: 780.426.1996 / F: 780.426.2889 / E: office@vneweekly.com / W: www.vneweekly.com

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER RON GARTH / ron@vneweekly.com
MANAGING EDITOR CAROLYN NIKODYM / carolyn@vneweekly.com
NEWS EDITOR ROSS MOROZ / ross@vneweekly.com
MUSIC EDITOR EDEN MUNRO / eden@vneweekly.com
ASSOCIATE MUSIC EDITOR BRYAN BIRTLES / bryan@vneweekly.com
DISH EDITOR CHRISTOPHER THRALL / christopher@vneweekly.com
SNOW ZONE EDITOR JEREMY DERKSEN / jeremy@vneweekly.com
PRODUCTION MANAGER LYLE BELL / lyle@vneweekly.com
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT MICHAEL SIEK / mike@vneweekly.com
LAYOUT SEAN RIVALIN / sean@vneweekly.com
LISTINGS GLENYS SWITZER / glenys@vneweekly.com

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SALES AND MARKETING MANAGER ROB LIGHTFOOT / rob@vneweekly.com
ADMINISTRATION / DISTRIBUTION MIKE GARTH / michael@vneweekly.com
ADMINISTRATION / PROMOTIONS JASMINE POLITESKI / jasmine@vneweekly.com

COVER PHOTOGRAPH IAN JACKSON / epicphotography.ca
CONTRIBUTORS Ricardo Acuña, Bobbi Barbanich, David Berry, Josef Braun, Rob Breszny, Colin Cathrea, Sarah Chan, Andrew Cisakowski, Gwynne Dyer, Luke Foster, Hart Golbeck, Scott Harris, Whirley Houston, Connie Howard, Ella Jameson, Sherry Dawn Knettle, Steve Lillebuen, James Lyle, Paul Matwychuk, Tanis McLeod, Trent McMartin, Andrea Nemerson, Mary Christa O'Keefe, TB Player, Sheena Rossiter, Joel Semchuk, Ron Yamouchi, Dave Young, Darren Zenko, Tara Zurowski
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KARLA HOMOLKA HAS A BABY...

HOW LONG BEFORE
HE CAN START
BRINGING HIS LITTLE
FRIENDS HOME FOR
SLEEPOVERS.

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MAIL LETTERS

WELL WELL WELL IS SWELL

This is just a note to express my appreciation for Connie Howard's excellent column Well Well Well ("The kind of meds you take really depends on where you're aiming," Feb 8 - Feb 14). I am a holistic nutritionist and aspiring naturopath and I encounter unsolicited opposition and challenge to my philosophy on health almost daily. Sometimes keeping a cool head to find the right arguments and best explanation is difficult.

This article couldn't have stated my views on the matter any better. Reconciling and understanding the differences between conventional and alternative health therapies is key if alternative health care is ever going to be a viable and respected option to the public. Connie Howard's piece also did this very well.

Again, thanks for a brilliant article.

ANGELE BESNER

Vue Weekly welcomes reader response, whether critical or complimentary. Send your opinion by mail (*Vue Weekly*, 10303 - 108th Street, Edmonton AB T5J 1L7), by fax (780.426.2889) or by e-mail (letters@vneweekly.com). Preference is given to feedback about articles published in *Vue Weekly*. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity.

God needs a little bling, too

ROSS MOROZ / ross@vneweekly.com

As Southern Alberta religious broadcaster's plans to expand into the province's major urban areas could be derailed by concerns about the honesty of its fundraising activities.

Lethbridge-based CJIL—a private, commercial Christian station operating under the brand name "the Miracle Network" that is operated by a non-profit charitable society called the Miracle Channel Association—has applied to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission for a license to set up transmitters in Edmonton and Calgary.

But at a hearing into the application held on Mon, Feb 12, federal regulators grilled station representatives about numerous complaints received from viewers about the station's fund drives, warning that the station could lose even its current license if it doesn't abide by new fundraising rules.

ACCORDING TO THE CRTC, complaints stemmed from statements made during the November 2004 and March 2005 fundraising campaigns.

"There is somebody right now watching and God is speaking to them about RRSPs," said a presenter in 2004. "They've got RRSPs and

NEWS GOD TV

they've got a sizable amount and it's a security thing. Well, it's not a security thing; your security is in God. And God is speaking to you to cash those in. I dare you to do it."

After a woman made a \$5 000 donation via credit card, a host said: "And we believe that God is going to give that back to you and you are going to be able to pay it off real fast."

In its ruling, the CRTC said that the overtures "placed an undue responsibility on the viewer to respond to the appeal," and that the station's hosts "predicted divine consequences of not responding, or exaggerated positive results of responding."

For its part, the Miracle Channel has indicated that it is comfortable with these conditions being placed on its license and the station is currently asking visitors to its website to write letters of support to the regulatory body. And it's no wonder that the broadcaster is so keen to expand its audience: according to the Miracle Channel's own estimates, the expansion would increase donations by 15 per cent, adding up to \$50.2 million over the next seven years. ▶

Local group plans little (green) house on the prairie

RIVERDALE NET ZERO ENERGY PROJECT CHOSEN TO BUILD ENERGY EFFICIENT HOME IN RIVER VALLEY

SCOTT HARRIS / scott@vnewswEEKLY.com

A team of homebuilders in Edmonton has been selected as finalists in a national competition to build Canada's first net zero energy homes.

The Riverdale Net Zero Energy Project will construct an energy-efficient duplex in Edmonton's River Valley that will produce as much renewable energy on-site as it consumes over the course of a year.

The project was one of 12 winners selected on Feb 13 from an initial field of 72 projects in the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's EQuilibrium sustainable housing competition.

Three other projects in Alberta—two in Red Deer and one in Calgary—were also selected. Each of the projects will be awarded \$50 000 from CMHC to offset costs.

Peter Amerongen, the vice president of Habitat Studio & Workshop, one of three lead organizations on the Riverdale project, says that designing a house that is able to meet its own energy needs was a real challenge in Edmonton.

"One of the things that's really interesting about it is that in order to get to net zero in Edmonton, with our climate, it's necessary to do just about everything," Amerongen explains. "You don't have the luxury of saying, 'are we going to do this or are we going to do that?' You've got to do everything you can."

DOING EVERYTHING MEANT bringing together a team of experts to design a sustainable structure that utilizes passive solar for space heating, solar heaters for hot water, and an array of 48 photovoltaic solar panels on the roof to provide the additional energy and heating needs for the two units of the duplex.

During the summer, the excess energy produced will be fed into the electrical grid and the house will draw an equivalent amount from the grid in the winter months, resulting in no net energy use annually.

While the solar panels might draw the attention of passersby, Gordon Howell, an electrical engineer specializing in solar energy systems and another of the core team members, stresses that the real key in designing the duplex was to drastically reduce how much energy it requires.

"To get to a net zero energy home, the most important thing is energy

efficiency," Howell explains. "It's the most important thing because energy efficiency is incredibly cheap."

"The first, biggest thing is really to pare energy use just to the bone, cut it down to an absolute bare essential," Amerongen adds. "That involves very high levels of insulation, a very tight house, really good windows and very efficient appliances, very efficient lighting and very efficient hot water-using

insulation is from recycled newspapers. The team chose primarily regional and renewable construction materials and interior materials were carefully selected to minimize emissions within the units to ensure air quality.

Almost non-existent utility bills are balanced out by the additional costs associated with building such an advanced home. Howell estimates that each of the 1 800-square-foot

Amerongen is also hopeful about the move he sees in the building industry towards more energy-efficient houses, and says the technology exists to make major reductions in the greenhouse gas emissions associated with housing in Canada.

"None of the technology is all that new. It's all stuff that's been around for some time," Amerongen points out. "It's really a matter of the intensity with

house gases. We should be leaders in that. We can afford to be."

Amerongen credits CMHC with taking the initiative to challenge builders to push the boundaries.

"It's pretty exciting to see 12 state-of-the-art houses going up across the country that are going to be real beacons of progress in this direction," he says.

Howell is thrilled by the potential that comes from proving net zero



NEWS | GREEN

appliances like washing machines, dishwashers and that sort of thing."

According to Howell, such efficiency measures, including highly insulated 16-inch walls and triple- and quadruple-glazed windows, means that the house would require less than \$50 worth of natural gas a year to heat, meaning the annual subscription cost for a gas line didn't make economic sense.

Instead, the team chose to simply add more solar power capacity to provide electrical heat. "You can heat the house with four toasters at minus 32," he says.

Sustainability was a priority throughout the design process, so most of the

units will have a market price over \$600 000, or about \$100 000 more than a comparable home in the area.

DESPITE THE PRICE TAG. Michael Barrer, a designer at Habitat Studio who is working on the project, says that as concern about the environment continues to grow and the cost of technology drops, many of their design features could become more widespread and affordable.

"I think there's some technology that we're putting into the house that isn't quite there yet, but we believe that's the direction it's going," he says. "I don't know if this will become standard relatively quickly, but there are a lot of factors that can be standardized to increase what the current norm is in construction."

which we're applying it. We've had all of these things for a while; it's just that fuel costs were a lot lower and climate change wasn't an issue and there wasn't really the compulsion to implement it at the level that we're doing it."

He adds that in addition to consumer demand and improvements in technology, the provincial government should take steps to encourage more buildings like this.

"It would be so much easier if it was easy to connect photovoltaic systems into the grid and sell the power back to the power companies at a reasonable price," Amerongen says. "We're one of a diminishing number of jurisdictions where that's not an option, and it's just completely inappropriate in a province like Alberta where we're producing such a high level of green-

energy homes are feasible, even in cold climates.

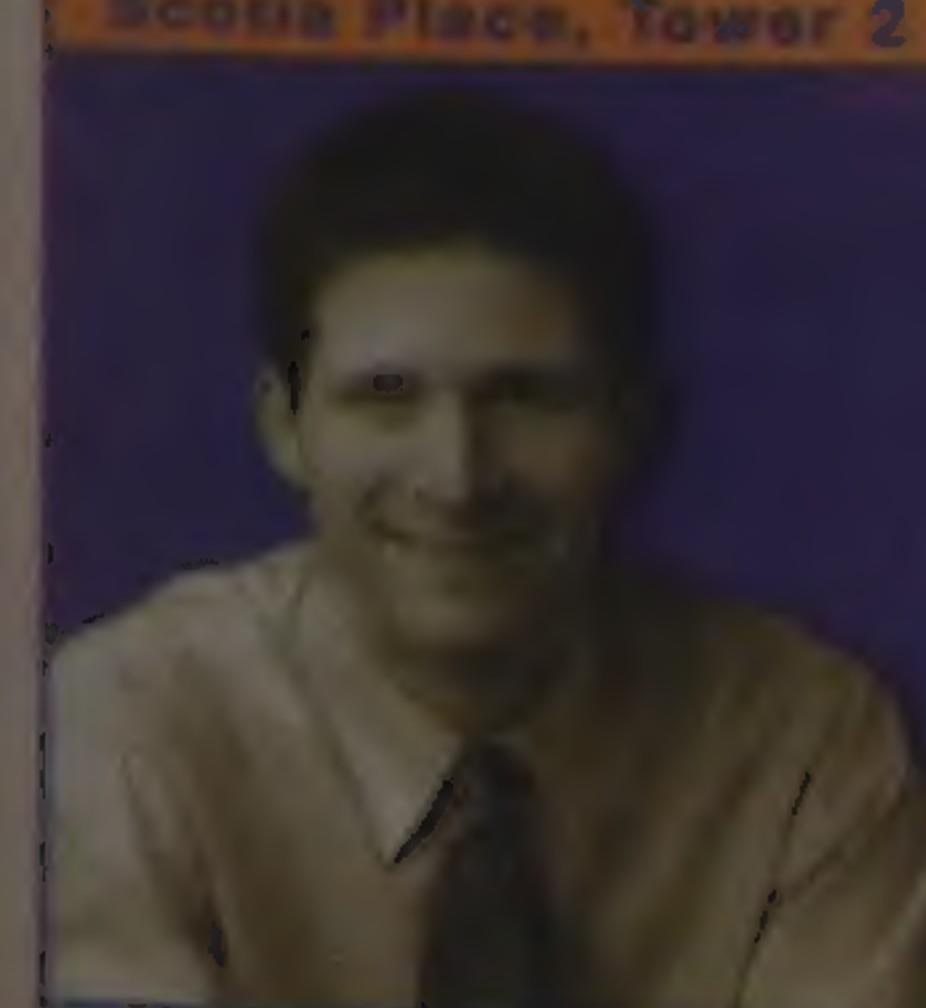
"This is not at all about building one house. It's all about how we can influence society," he says, adding that the group has plans for extensive public outreach as well as partnerships to share technology and encourage more sustainable building practices.

"We expect to have a ton of fun with the house," Howell says. "We expect it will blow a lot of paradigms."

Construction is slated to begin in April, with hopes that the first unit will be occupied by January 2008. One side of the duplex will be open to the public for up to a year to serve as a prototype and public outreach tool.

Details of the project and updates as construction progresses are available at www.riverdalenetzero.ca. ▀

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Of water and chocolate ...

HEALTH
WELL, WELL, WELL
CONNIE HOWARD
connie.howard@vnewswEEKLY.com

Lots to comment on again this week—never a dull moment in health news, no time for talk of chocolates or champagne or love or other Valentine's matters, though I suppose heart matters of this sort are as vital as health topics get.

Canada's *Food Guide for Healthy Eating* was revamped this week and has at long last moved from the tired avoid-fat mantra of the past several decades and given us the okay to include healthy fats in our diets (for healthy hearts and brains and veins). Not that we have the good-fat, bad-fat facts straight yet (how's that for a mouthful?): cholesterol myths still abound.

Most of us still think margarine is better than butter, even though (trans fats and omega 3/6 balance aside) years of eating margarine has produced no decrease in heart disease, and even though the chemical manufacturing process of margarine is questionable, and even though *Becel Pro-active*, touted as a heart disease prevention tool, had trouble getting Health Canada's approval a number of years ago based on high levels of hydrocarbons and phytosterols.

Most of us also still think the saturated fats found in butter have an adverse effect on heart health, even though conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) in butter has been shown in numerous studies to be heart-healthy and even an effective

weight-loss aid (I like this!).

The Framingham Heart Study going on at Harvard for something like 50 years (along with many other studies) has shown little or no association between diets high in cholesterol or saturated fat and the development of heart disease (other than, in some cases, ironically, those ingesting the least cholesterol showing the highest blood levels). But margarine is still being recommended by doctors.

The new guide does finally recommend vitamin supplementation—at least I'll stop hearing about the steady wisdom of nutritionists reminding us that we can get all the nutrition we need from our food if we eat well (food that is grown in depleted soils, engineered for travel, harvested prematurely and in most cases doesn't even remotely resemble, nutritionally, the food my mom used to grow in our backyard).

ON THE MENTAL HEALTH front, I was reminded that even though omega 3s have been shown to be successful in treating bipolar disorder, depression and a pile of other psychiatric problems, and even though SSRIs and antipsychotics are strongly linked to obesity, diabetes and suicidal tendencies, and even though medicine is supposed to do no harm, we're still prescribing them like mad.

And even though lead and other heavy metal poisoning has long been known to cause personality changes, depression, learning difficulties, ADHD and a pile of other things, we're still

slow to regulate industry dumping junk into our air and water, still turning to new psychiatric drugs to manage symptoms, and still discounting the power of natural ways of getting our bodies to shed heavy metals.

Speaking of lead, here's an interesting tidbit: Beethoven, who suffered deafness, rage and depression, was found to have high levels of lead concentrations in his body more than 150 years after his death.

Still on the topic of toxicity, while we're arguing about bottled versus tap water, one parched Australian state is set to recycle sewage for drinking water. Yum ... But, really, consider the facts: distilled and other soft water (and soft drinks, which are made from distilled water), which has had all metals and minerals and everything removed, has been strongly associated with increased osteoporosis, hypothyroidism and heart disease resulting from mineral loss. But bottled water is environmentally unfriendly, expensive, prone to higher levels of bacteria and may also be distilled, or even someone else's tap water. And tap water has been fluorinated and chlorinated and everything-ated and contains hormones and antibiotics and antidepressants and anti-cholesterol drugs and god-knows-what else that slips through processing.

So don't drink water, drink wine made with grapes from another planet. Or (maybe a wiser and more practical suggestion) use charcoal filters to get rid of the worst offenders in tap water. □

One world has walls

COMMENT **DYER STRAIGHT**
GWINNE DYER
gwynne@vnewswEEKLY.com

If good fences make good neighbours, then the world is experiencing an unprecedented outbreak of neighbourliness. They used to wall cities. Now they wall whole countries.

The latest country to start building a wall—sorry, a "security fence"—is Thailand, which has just announced plans to build a physical barrier along the most inaccessible 75 km of its frontier with Malaysia. The goal, says Bangkok, is to stop "terrorists" from crossing into Thailand's restive Muslim-majority southern provinces from northern Malaysia, whose people share the same language and religion. If experience elsewhere is any guide, the whole border will be walled sooner or later.

India is well on the way to being walled (except along the Himalayas, where the mountains do the job for free). The barrier along its 3 000 km border with Pakistan is largely complete except in the parts of Kashmir where the steep and broken terrain precludes the construction of the usual two-row, three-metre-high fence, with concertina wire and mines between the two fences. And India is now building an even longer barrier to halt illegal immigration from Bangladesh.

While India's walls keep unwelcome intruders out, the barriers around North Korea are meant to keep North Koreans in. The original fortifications along the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea, which have been continually improved since the '50s, were built mainly to stop infiltration by North Korean troops or saboteurs. However, the fence that Beijing is now building along its own frontier with North Korea is a precautionary measure to stop an immense wave of refugees from entering China if the regime in Pyongyang collapses.

The majority of the new walls springing up around the world are there to stop either terrorist attacks or illegal immigration, but sometimes they also serve as a unilateral way of defining a country's desired borders. That is certainly true of the 2 700 km of high sand or stone berms, backed by wire fences, mines, radar, troop bunkers and artillery bases, that seal off Western Sahara, annexed by Morocco in 1975, from the camps in Algeria from which many of the former inhabitants waged a guerrilla war until the 1991 ceasefire.

It is equally true of the wall that Israel is building through the occupied West Bank. The country has long had heavily mined and monitored barrier fences along its external frontiers with

Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon and around the Gaza Strip, but the wall in the West Bank does not follow the ceasefire line of 1967. Instead it penetrates deep into the Palestinian territories at a number of points to leave Jewish settlement blocs on the Israeli side, and it cuts off (Arab) East Jerusalem from the West Bank entirely.

Pakistan is building a 2 400 km fence with Afghanistan, Uzbekistan has built a fence along its border with Tadzhikistan, the United Arab Emirates is erecting a barrier along its frontier with Oman and Kuwait is upgrading its existing 215 km wall along the Iraqi frontier. But the most impressive barriers are certainly around Saudi Arabia.

THE SAUDI KINGDOM HAS been quietly pursuing an \$8.5 billion project to fence off the full length of its porous border with Yemen for some years, but the highest priority now is to get a high-tech barrier built along the 900-km border with Iraq.

"If and when Iraq fragments, there's going to be a lot of people heading south," said Nawaf Obaid, head of the Saudi National Security Assessment Project, "and that is when we have to be prepared." The new wall will include buried movement sensors, ultraviolet night-vision cameras, face-recognition software and quite probably automated weapons in addition to the usual electrified fences, concertina wire, dry moats and mines.

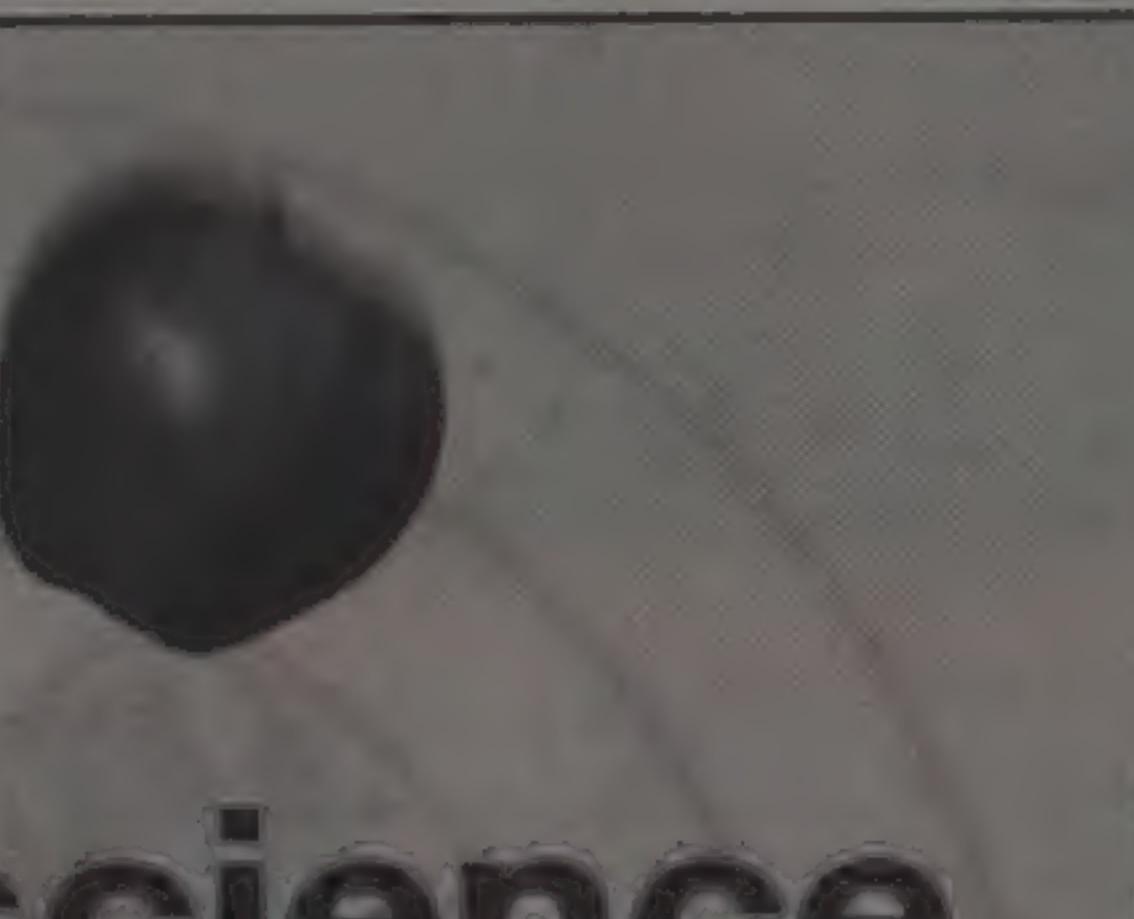
By comparison, the apparently endless debate about building a relatively low-tech fence along the 3 360 km US border with Mexico to cut illegal immigration seems like an echo from an innocent past.

The reason that the United States is incapable of controlling its Mexican border is political, not financial or technological: powerful domestic lobbies work to ensure a steady supply of "undocumented" Mexican workers who will accept very low wages because they are in the United States illegally. President Bush has now been authorized by Congress to build a fence along about 1 125 km of the Mexican border, but he will stall as long as he can while experimenting with a so-called "virtual fence."

No equivalent lobby operates in the European Union, and it is only a matter of time before really serious barriers appear on the EU's land frontiers, especially with Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Turkey. The walls are going up all over the world, and most of them will not come down for a long time, if ever. □

Gwynne Dyer is a London-based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries. His column appears regularly in *Vue Weekly*.

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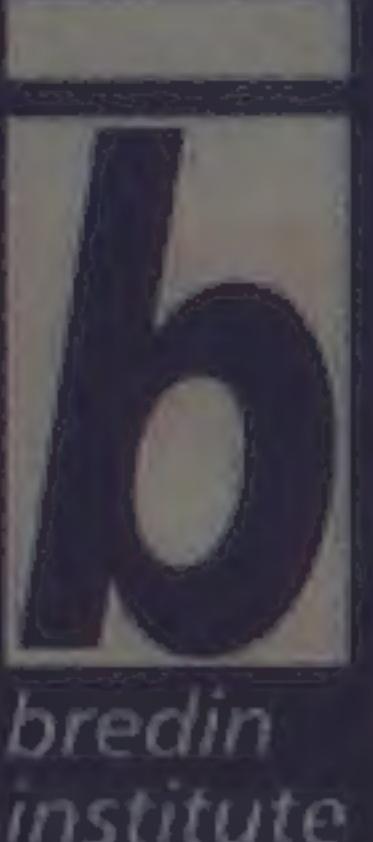
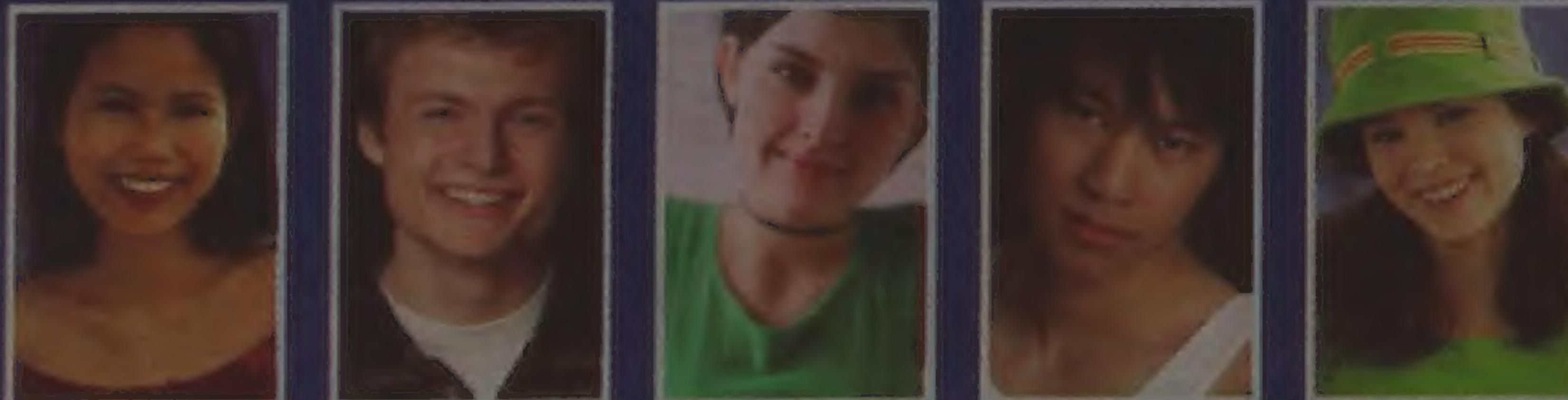
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*In dealing with climate
change, we're missing
the smaller picture*

RICARD ACUÑA / ualberta.ca/parkland

After 25 years of studies, reports and conferences, it seems that the North American media, public and political leaders have finally reached a tipping point when it comes to climate change.

Governments of all stripes, from the Bush White House to Conservative Alberta, are now talking about the steps they will take to combat the impact of humans on our climate.

But this newly found climate consciousness is raising a whole new set of issues, particularly in Alberta where the end-game for politicians seems to be finding a way to curb emissions without impacting our level of production from the tar sands.

Some of the suggested "solutions" being offered up by the Alberta government and the oil and gas industry include "clean" coal, coal gasification, carbon capture and sequestration and nuclear energy.

These various technologies, although still entirely unproven in the context of Alberta's tar sands, may indeed succeed in reducing carbon emissions at some point in the not too distant future. The question that nobody seems to be looking at, however, is at what cost?

For example, any supposed solution that relies on coal entirely neglects the real environmental impact of coal-mining in the first place. Yes, in theory energy can be obtained from coal with virtually no CO₂ emissions. But that does not change the fact that coal in Alberta is mined in huge open pits, which have a disastrous impact on local water sheds, flora and wildlife habitats. Nor does it address the emissions of the huge machines used to dig out and transport the coal. When you factor in the amount of water required to generate energy from coal, it really seems ludicrous that anyone could suggest increased use of coal as a way to solve an environmental problem.

There are also concerns with the suggested technological silver bullet of carbon sequestration—which involves capturing the CO₂ released from industrial processes, and injecting it into underground rock formations. Has anybody looked at the long-term impacts of filling the ground with CO₂? What would happen if one of those rock formations were to shift or somehow breach? This technology is entirely unproven, its long-term impacts unknown, and at \$300 per ton of CO₂ sequestered is financially non-viable. All this for something that "deals" with the problem of emissions by literally sweeping them under the carpet.

COST OVERRUNS IN NUCLEAR energy projects in Canada have been extreme,

with projects costing two to three times the amount projected, and reactors lasting about half as long as estimated. The industry simply could not survive without the huge level of government subsidies it receives.

It is also a myth that nuclear is a clean source of energy. The environmental footprint of uranium mining, the emissions involved in transporting uranium and the extreme water consumption of reactors make nuclear energy entirely non-sustainable. Add to that the ever-present danger of a meltdown, and the radioactive waste that will be around for thousands of years, and it makes one seriously wonder what these nuclear proponents are thinking.

All of these technologies are being proposed for "cleaning up" Alberta's tar sands, but nobody seems to be talking about the environmental footprint of the tar sands themselves. Beyond greenhouse gases and climate change, these are operations that are tearing up virtually one-third of Alberta's landscape, destroying upwards of 3 million barrels of water per day and wreaking havoc on the health of humans and wildlife.

Even if they could find a way to completely eliminate emissions from the mining of tar sands, these other environmental and health impacts would not only remain, they would actually increase given the rapid pace of expansion.

The reality is that perhaps environmentalists and activists have done themselves a disservice. By focusing on climate change we have allowed the politicians to now "embrace" this idea by advocating further environmental destruction in other areas—essentially focusing on the trees while destroying the forest.

It is time that we start to push the envelope further. It is time to start asking why we are mining this dirty unsustainable fuel in the first place—especially when we do not even "need" most of it in Canada. And the argument that we would disrupt our flow of income is just as ridiculous. If someone is paying \$5 a shot to stick needles in your eye, is your first thought that stopping would hurt you financially?

The reality Albertans and politicians need to face today is that, far beyond climate change, the only way to clean up the tar sands and make them truly green is to leave them in the ground in the first place. Anything short of that will simply add to the degree of environmental devastation our planet is already facing. ▀

Ricardo Acuña is Executive Director of the Parkland Institute, a non-partisan public policy research institute housed at the University of Alberta.

02-12-07—Snowbound in Southern Alberta

RANDOM DISPATCH

DARREN ZENKO
dispatch@vneweekly.com

It keeps coming down ... beautiful fat flakes ... layering lockdown white on roads and roadmobiles ...

Snowed in! The fear/fantasy of childhood and pioneer-days lore has, in the event, nowhere near the romance you'd like it to have. Dreams of nothin' but quilt-covered snuggling behind drifted doors belong in imagined days of root-cellars, Clydesdales and fieldstone hearths; modern snowbinding is too data-porous. First order of business: emailing the boss for telecommuted orders, work by wire.

Still, the minute-to-minute supervisory eye isn't present, and the blank white prairie desolation outside the farmhouse picture window doesn't do much for psychological motivation; it's like a hope-deadening glimpse into a special corner of Limbo reserved for unbaptized fenceposts and cowsheds. So not a lot of work gets done: even in the heart of Extreme Cyber Century 2000 a cabined-up couple finds pioneer-style diversions ... like reading the Bible!

Except our study of the Good Book consists of gigglingly checking out every Chapter 4, Verse 20. There's not much secret stoner revelation to be had from this exercise—I doubt some white-Rasta hippie's going to be using "Adha bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and raise cattle" (Gen 4:20) as his email signature, or his stall-wall tag. Eventually our Bible-reading descends into idle riffling of the pages in search of baby names. Which I guess is pretty pioneer-style, too.

"I'm glad you're here," my girl purred while we wait for the kettle to boil. "I'd be freaking out if I had to be by myself. Plus, I can always kill and eat you." I ought to be nervous, but I know I'll never become lunch: having been treated at various times with antibiotics, vitamins and pesticides (aphid infestation, who knew?), my ribs are incompatible with her chosen organic lifestyle, and, besides, we've got

Road warriors, reunions and ugly

HOCKEY IN THE BOX

DAVE YOUNG AND TB PLAYER
inthebox@vneweekly.com

In case you missed it, the Oilers are on a seven-game road trip. And, in case you missed it, this trip will likely spell the difference between having a crack at the playoffs and requiring a miracle to get in. The trip started with a 3-0 loss in Boston on Tuesday. Six more games follow (Buffalo, Toronto, Ottawa, Columbus, Detroit and Minnesota) and the Oilers return just in time for the Feb 27 trade deadline and Mark Messier's jersey retirement ceremony. Exciting, no?

THE POOP I'd always been curious if Joffrey Lupul (being a palindrome) was one of many or one of few NHL players with palindromic surnames. So I pored through the NHL record book, scanning the names of all current and former NHL players. The only other two players I found: Joel Otto—former Flame and Gary Lupul—former Canuck. It's really not that bloody interesting, but it took a long time to figure out. DY

DAMN YOU, SCHEDULE PERSON After this seven-game road trip, the Oilers will spend four games at home followed by three on the road. Then they will have six games at home and then six more games on the road to finish the season. Ten games are against Northwest Division rivals and five of those are against Minnesota. Yay. This is fun. DY

LETTER TO THE OILERS FROM DAVE'S WIFE HEATHER Miss the playoffs. Thanks. HH

plenty of supplies: enough President's Choice "Blue Menu" Wasabi & Honey rice crisps to last almost forever (mostly because they're really gross and we'd almost rather starve).

IN PICTURING BEING detained by weather in a remote location, one likes to think of themselves heroically: given adequate supplies, the forced removal from the day-to-day bustle is imagined as a great chance at catching up, and self-improvement, at spiritual and emotional decompression. What really happens is you go stir-crazy almost immediately, watching roads worsen minute by minute as the snow piling up around your vehicle makes it less and less likely you'll even get to the highway in the first place. The trucker landlord says he'll get a plow out sometime tomorrow to clear the access road. Until then you pace, you swear under your breath, you take futile "relaxation" baths, as inaccessible urban responsibilities quadruple in gravity.

The real hell, though, is the *accessible* urban responsibilities, the inescapability of work. My girl's got herself a full-on Snow Day (Wheel)—she can't phone in her clients' dinner or fax them their personal care—while I'm stuck in this sort of electronic otherspace, physically stuck in a cosy winter cabin with my lover but mentally (and contractually) obligated to be halfway at work. It causes friction in the farmhouse, interference ... two lives 180 degrees out of phase. The silence of my grumpy laptop work is boring for her; the sound of her bored riffling through a lifestyle magazine is enough to crack my teeth.

I resent that tech reality has wrecked and worked the only chance I've had to experience old fashioned snowed-in conditions. The modern information worker has nowhere to run, no scenario that will excuse not being in touch. Sick, distant, weather-stuck, travelling ... as long as there's a phone line, a cell tower and a laptop (or, God help us, a BlackBerry) in begging, borrowing or stealing distance, productivity is demanded and expected ...

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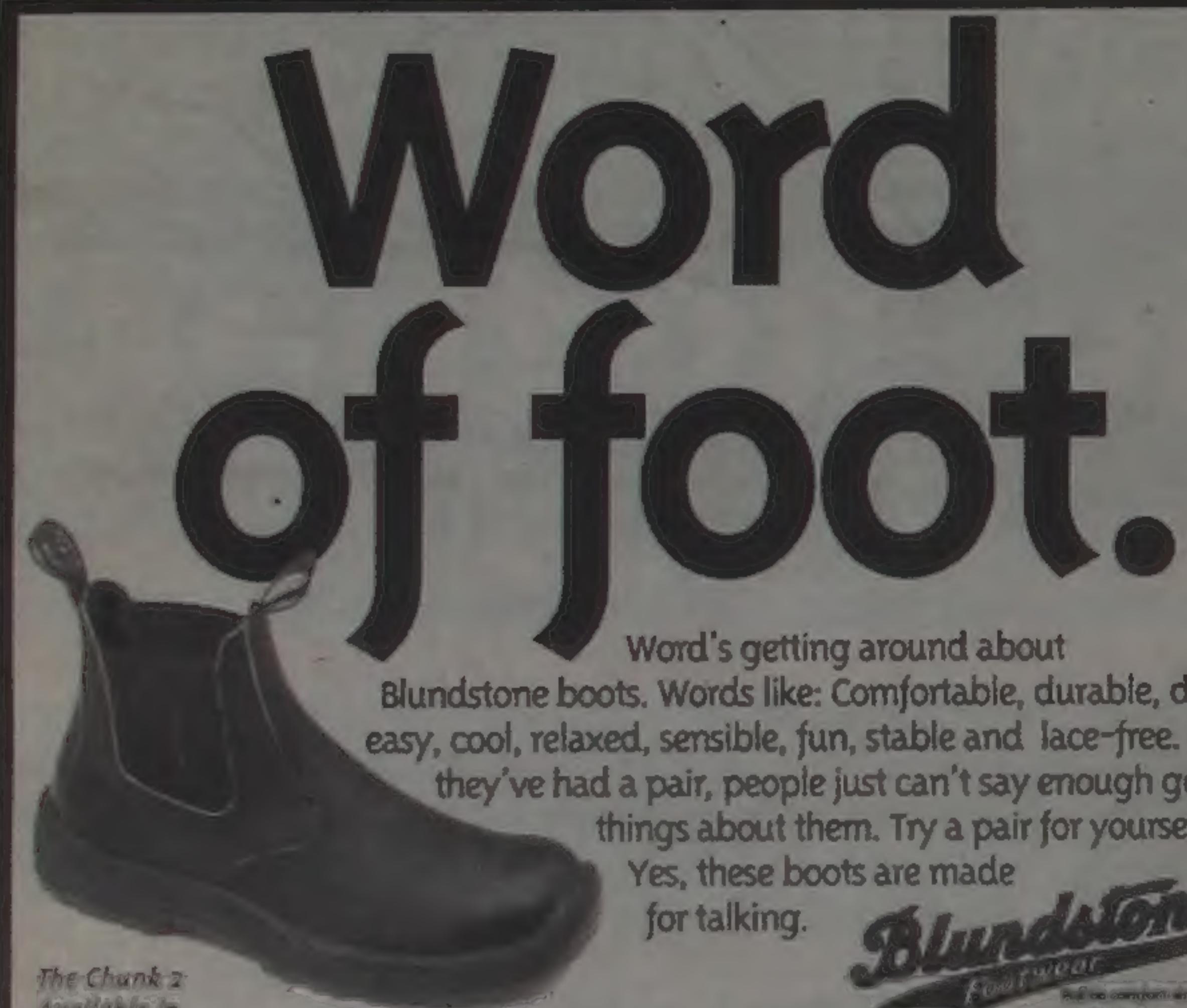
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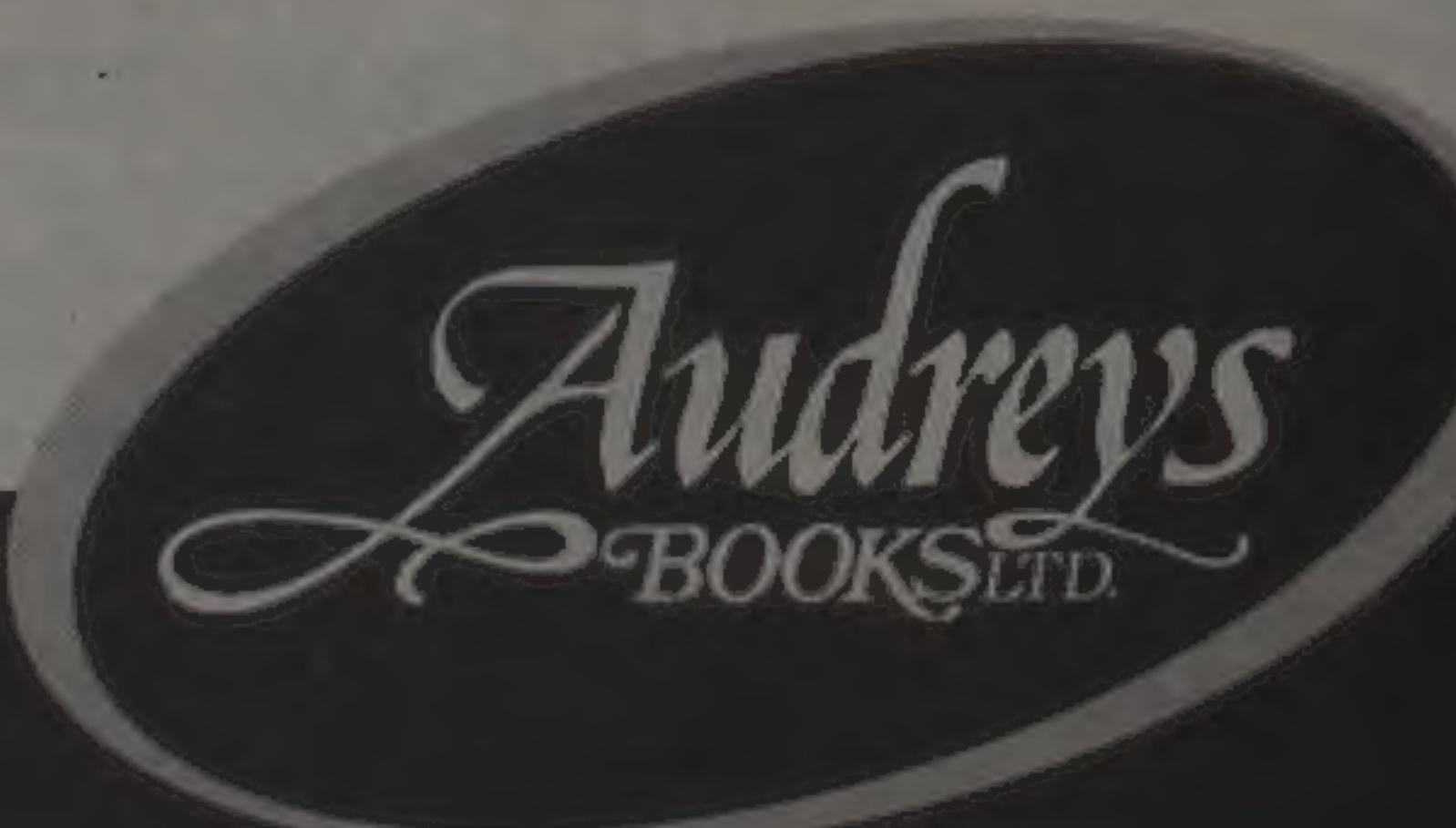
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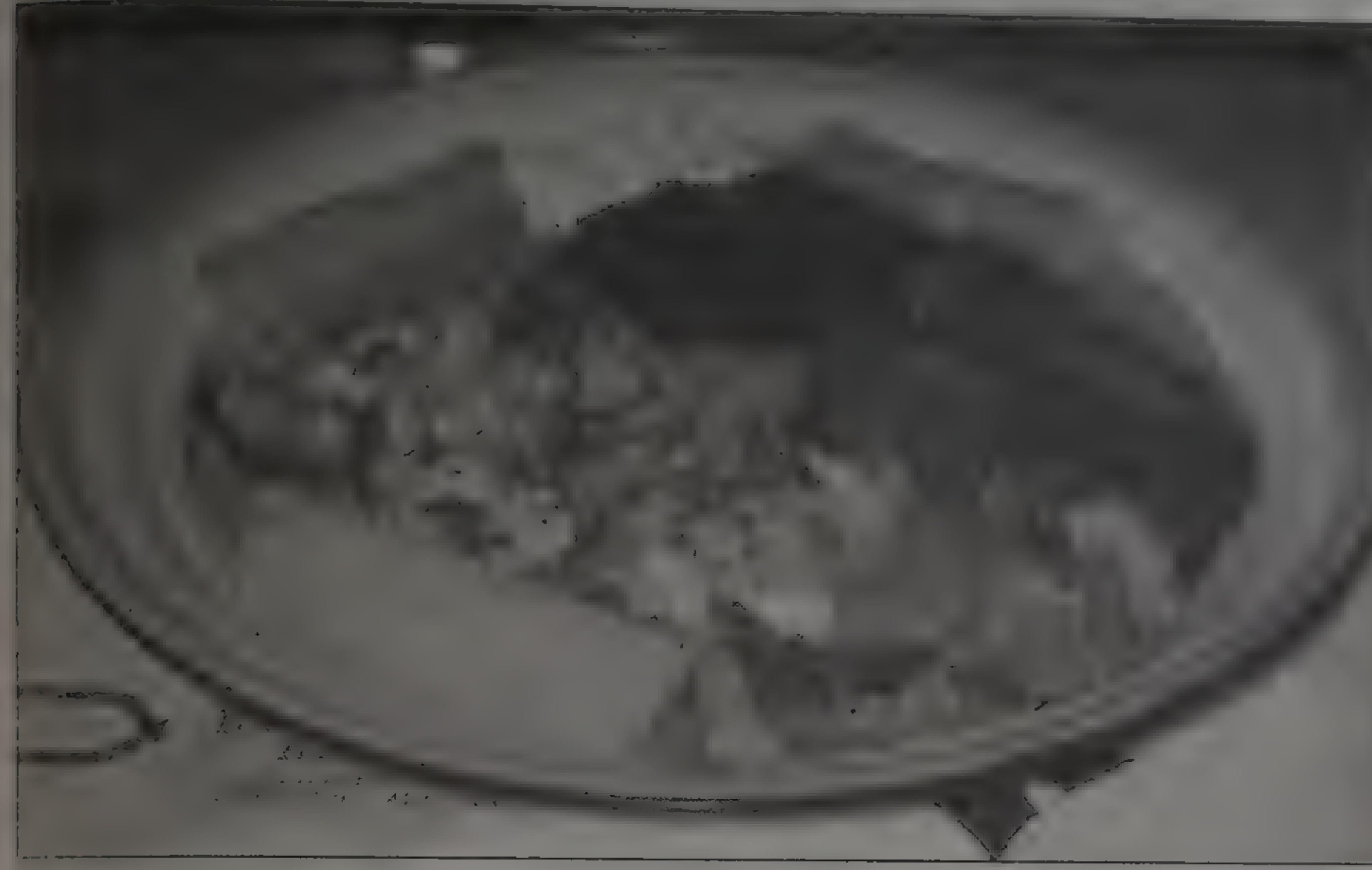
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Learn, lunch and linger over Ethiopian delights

SHEENA ROSSITER / sheena@vneweekly.com

ETHIOPIAN With its subdued outside appearance, wedged in between a very Albertan bar and very Albertan shops, Whyte Avenue restaurant **Langano Skies** could easily be another Albertan vendor.

But once those doors swing open, it takes any hungry guest across the world to Ethiopia itself—one of the few restaurants in this city capable of doing this. It defines both Ethiopian cuisine and Ethiopian culture.

As we made our way down to the end of the party section of the Whyte Avenue strip, we finally made it to the calm Langano Skies. We felt at ease the moment we arrived; though unfamiliar, the warm atmosphere was instantly inviting and relaxing.

We were greeted by the server and had a brief wait since we came just after the post-dinner rush. We were seated at our table in a spaciously open dining room.

We opened the menu, completely confused and feeling a little out of our element. The owners know that many Edmonton diners are unfamiliar with Ethiopian cuisine, so the menu tells a story rather than just telling us what was for dinner. Inserts in the menu not only educate about Ethiopian cuisine, but about the culture as well.

As we read, the only thing familiar to us was the page for those who were less adventurous: Western Fare. After our server saw the perplexed looks on our faces, she gladly helped teach us

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about Ethiopian cuisine. We finally decided on the chicken dishes of doro aletcha (\$9.50) and doro tibs (\$12.75), then lightened it up a bit with the vegetarian gomen wot (\$8.50).

It was a longer wait than I was used to in a nearly empty restaurant, but it was well worth it. All three dishes arrived on one massive platter called a moseb, which was draped with a base of a spongy pancake-like sourdough crepe called ingera. We're told that ingera serves as the base of every Ethiopian meal.

The shared platter and communal ingera probably wasn't the best set up for a germaphobe, but thankfully for us it worked out quite well.

WE DROVE INTO THE gomen wot, a spinach and onion dish freshened with a hint of garlic and teamed up with lyeb (a homemade Ethiopian version of cottage cheese). We ripped off sections of ingera to use as our utensils. The creamy combination of the spinach and lyeb was fantastic and began to fill us up before we got a chance to try the rest of the dishes.

We began to pace ourselves so we could at least get a taste of the rest of our meals. We moved on to the doro

tibs—a safe choice suggested by the server for those who are slightly terrified by the unknown. The doro tibs wasn't spicy and presented a good substitute for stomachs that don't always agree with spice.

However, the side salad wasn't the best idea for a utensil-less meal. It was a nice flashback to childhood memories of eating utensil-free, but I could have used a fork.

We then indulged in the curry-based doro aletcha. Cooked with ginger and the Ethiopian spice nitir kibeh, the lighter dish was the perfect amount since we were nearly full up from sampling the others. By the end, we had a tower of take-out containers so high that it blocked our view of each other. We still felt the need to relax and enjoy some dessert.

Going for a more Canadian style, we went for the chocolate brownie (\$5.50), but complemented it with an Ethiopian tea (\$3), the house specialty. The delicious chocolate brownie was pretty standard, the typical dessert for most restaurants. However, the Ethiopian tea was the perfect way to end our meal. Similar to chai, it was made on site and we were given a generously sized pot for the price.

Not only was the dining experience at Langano Skies unique, it was relaxing and a full-fledged cultural immersion. The glory, the beauty and the flavours of Ethiopia are available just down Whyte. ▶

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A Golden Bird told me about a great Vietnamese meal

ELLA JAMESON / ella@vneweekly.com

Edmonton's bustling Chinatown, anchored along downtown's 97 Street, is a fertile oasis of authentic Asian dining. With a smorgasbord of Cantonese, Vietnamese, Thai and Korean cuisines, there are

plenty of options to choose from.

During Chinese New Year, these multifarious restaurants become the social centres of the Asian communities. Though each venue has its own virtues, one of my favourites is **The Golden Bird**, a small Vietnamese restaurant that is centrally located and perpetually busy. Family-owned and operated, the Golden Bird offers fantastic service and great food in the most basic of environs.

My brother, his wife and I slid into worn chairs at one of the two remaining tables last Saturday evening, thankful that we hadn't arrived any later than our prearranged 7 pm. I hadn't been to the restaurant in a couple of years, but little had changed. Fifteen glass-topped tables sat in the tiny space, with chairs for two to eight people apiece. The walls' lower halves sported wood grain paneling; above hung a mish-mash of worn artwork and dog-eared travel posters.

Restaurateur Chic Pham doesn't need to update the décor. She, her husband and their son ("Huang the super-server") are kept busy from morning to night serving the non-stop flow of patrons who have discovered this gem of Vietnamese cuisine.

Vietnamese

MON-SAT 11AM
GOLDEN BIRD RESTAURANT
10944 97 STREET
780-469-1602

Huang brought menus along with a complimentary pot of green tea, then graciously took our drink orders. My brother and his wife stuck with the tea, but I asked for a glass of Sinh Tô (carrot juice \$3.25).

"You had to ask for that", Huang said with mock disdain. Apparently it takes a fair number of carrots to create a glass of juice, but he wandered off with an exaggerated sigh and I soon heard the sound of the juicer grinding away.

ALL THREE OF US enjoy squid, so we decided to start with an order of tempura-battered calamari (\$9.95). It was served crispy and hot on a simple white plate. Small flakes of spicy red pepper clung to the batter, but the overall flavour was sweet and pungent. A side of chili sauce was a pleasant supplement to the delicate and tender pieces of squid.

I sipped from time to time on the carrot juice, which turned out to be more of a creamy iced shake. Its sweetness wasn't very suited to the peppery appetizer, so I set it aside in favour of a swig of water.

While we enjoyed the calamari, the



kitchen was busy preparing our entrées. I opted for the charcoal-grilled satay chicken (\$9.45), served with spring rolls on vermicelli. My sister-in-law went for her usual, the Five Star: five delicacies comingled in a heap upon a bed of white rice (\$10.95). My brother, unwilling to tell us what he was ordering, waited until we had handed back our menus before mysteriously placing his order by number, then added extra satay (spice) for emphasis.

All three dishes arrived just as we pushed the empty appetizer plate to the edge of the table. Our scent receptors were inundated with a massive influx of flavour and aroma. My brother's overflowing dish was by far the most aggressive: his plate of crunchy vermicelli was topped with broccoli, carrots, peppers, onions and cauliflower, then heaped with shrimp, squid, chicken and pork (\$14.95). I felt the fiery sauce in the back of my throat from three feet away.

My sister-in-law's Five Star consisted of shrimp, pork, beef, chicken and spring rolls, served on a bed of rice with a side of fish sauce. She promptly

According to the traditional lunisolar calendar, Chinese New Year begins on the first day of the first lunar month. This year Feb 18 marks the beginning of the year of the pig—or, more accurately, the golden pig, an event which only occurs once every 600 years. It is thought to fetch great prosperity to children born in this auspicious year.

Legend has it that the first day of the new lunar calendar brings Nian, a man-eating beast from the mountains, who threatens to slip into homes dur-

ing the night and devour the occupants. Sensitive to loud noises and bright colours, Nian is frightened off by firecrackers and lion dances. It scurries back to the hills and the community is saved.

Edmonton's annual Firecracker Parade will be held on Sun, Feb 18 along 97 Street. Many Asian community groups participate in the celebrations, so any restaurant in Chinatown is a great location from which to enjoy the festivities of the Chinese New Year. ▶

rolls sat atop the mound and a side of fish sauce added flavour to the entire delicious concoction.

We argued for each of our choices, but ultimately we were all winners. With the possible exception of one piece of carrot that my brother claimed "made his eyes bleed" we had all made great selections.

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

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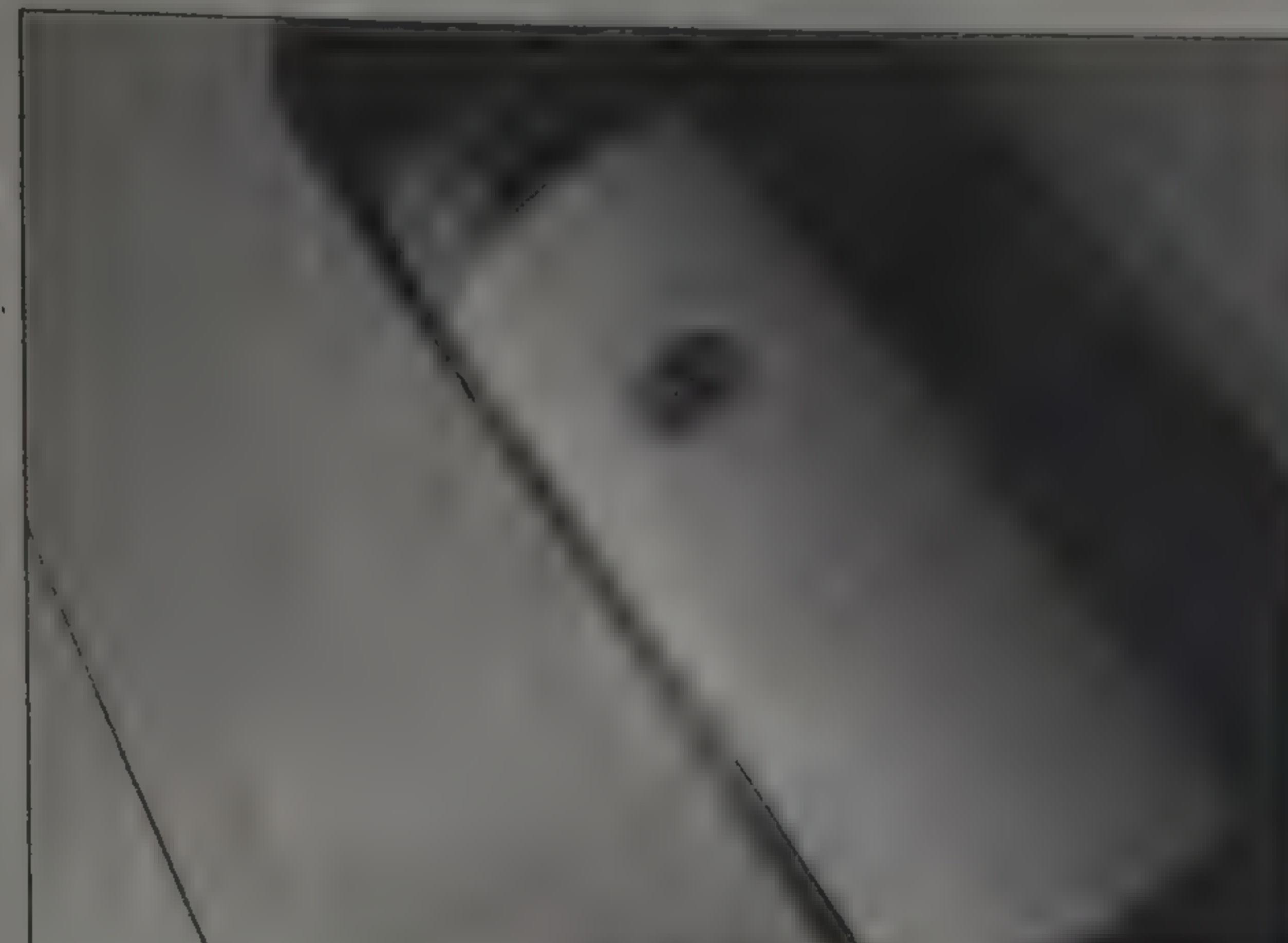
2003 WAYNE THOMAS PETIT VERDOT
MCLAREN VALE, AUSTRALIA, \$25

In Australia, Petit Verdot is not a grape grown in great quantities. It is generally used as a blending grape to add depth to Merlots or Cabernets. The French tend to use it as a primary grape, however, and an opportunity to try it from another country certainly had me hoping for the best.

This dark, inky red wine emitted a thick tannin nose with a hint of raspberry. Such a strong nose had me wondering if it would fall into "the Australian trap" and be way over the top. My first taste nearly knocked me on my ass.

It was thick, loaded with tannins and lacked any identifiable fruit. I worked through my entire first glass: there was not hint of it giving way.

After a while away from the wine, I returned to give it another go. I was glad that I did. The fruit was becoming more



evident and the texture of the wine began to relax. The flavours evolved very well through the palate and left a warm, tingling feeling at the back. The fact that it lightened so well gave me further hope that had I decanted it, it would have come out of its shell even more.

This wine had me excited, disappointed and surprised in the space of 90 minutes. The Wayne Thomas was certainly not a boring wine and would likely hold up against a very rich meal. However, I wasn't blown away. For the price, France offers a better Verdot for the cellar. □

GOLDEN BIRD RESTAURANT

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Sitting back and satiated, my sister-in-law decided to have a Vietnamese coffee (\$3.25). I would have joined her in ordering the icy sweet mocha finisher, but I suspected that the late evening caffeine would keep me up for hours. As we watched her coffee drip slowly into the glass of thick condensed milk, we all reminisced about the numerous wonderful meals we have had in Chinatown.

On Feb 18, I'll be back downtown to celebrate the New Year with good dim sum and great company. After all, it's the year of the pig—what better way to start it off than at the trough. □

FOOD NEWS | DISH WEEKLY

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You can find freshies, backcountry and character in the Kootenay wilds

BOBBI BARBARICH / bobbi@vueweekly.com

Whitewater Winter Resort is renowned for its dry, dependable snowfalls. Over 10 metres of powder blanket Whitewater each winter. Few resorts have comparable snowfalls, making it a particularly enticing mountain in the Kootenays.

I was literally on the edge of my seat for the 11 hour drive southwest from Edmonton. Not even the terrifying Nelson pass, a 43 km climb in slimy wet snow at twilight, could dampen my spirits.

Whitewater is located 22km south of Nelson, BC, on Highway 6. The resort offers many ski and stay packages with various hotels in the city. There is also a shuttle to the mountain: the First Chair Shuttle Service has five pick-up locations throughout Nelson. For \$9 one way or \$15 round trip, you will be at the base before the first chair departs.

Whitewater's base elevation is 1 640 metres and its highest peak, Ymir, is 2 398 metres. My husband,

Colin, and I couldn't see the peak when we arrived. A dense fog was squatting over the mountain. This fog would plague our trip throughout the Kootenays, shape-shifting and altering views and conditions for five days.

At a relatively small 1 084 acres, the entire U-shaped resort is usually visible from the base. Imagine you are standing in the opening of the U, facing the curve. On your right is the south-facing Silver King area of the resort, characterized by mostly blue and a couple green runs. Where the U first begins to curve are paths to what is arguably some of the best backcountry skiing available in the Kootenays.

Little snow had fallen in the 10 days before my arrival, and still abundant acreage was available to be carved. On the left, north-facing side of the resort is the Summit side. Nearly all the runs here are black and wicked. The Summit side of Whitewater is steep, deep and intense. It is not for the faint of heart.

Although groomed runs are available, deeps, bowls and glades are the

WHITEWATER

three main reasons for going to Whitewater. Some of the pitches on the Silver King side are highly suitable for intermediate skiers wanting to get a good lesson in glades, but the majority of tree skiing at Whitewater is steep and stupendous. The trees are massive, rather wide and very old.

MY KNEES FELT similarly old after making my way through the well-treed cliff area between Blast and Blast Ski way. It took me nearly 30 minutes, and I met with only two other individuals the entire time. Perhaps there were more people and I did not see them through the pea soup. The trees are less dense below Glory Basin near the eastern border of the resort, and here I saw several more people, although there were fresh lines available for everyone. It was an eerie feeling, hearing other riders and skiers without knowing

where they were.

Bowls are indeed another reason to visit Whitewater. I took the traverse off the left of the Summit chair and hiked up to the ridge overlooking the entire resort. No one was within earshot let alone visible. The fog had moved further into the valley, and for a moment I could see all of Whitewater and beyond. It was breathtaking—as was the arduous yet rewarding journey on which I was about to embark.

I chose Whitey Houston on my iPod for the descent. Down through Catch Basin I roared; Whitey banging my eardrums through smooth turns into the Enchanted Forest. No one but Gravy and Mr Bell joined me during the complicated and very steep tree run.

I eventually cleared the trees and found myself a groomed run, where Enchanted Forest meets Motherlode. Ripping down the piste after the invigorating bowl and tree adventure, I realized I didn't actually know what "motherlode" meant.

I have since learned that the City of

Nelson was incorporated during the gold rush, and the term "motherlode" is an ode to those years. It was first coined when miners followed the gold in rivers upstream to discover its source. The source was dubbed the "mother" of the vein, also called "lode." At Whitewater, the analogy is perfect: the blue run is a lead-out from spectacular bowls of white gold.

Unfortunately, we did not experience the fresh, legendary powder for which Whitewater is most famous. The snow was certainly deep, but my daydreams of blasting through virgin fresh-fallen snow under clear blue skies would remain daydreams. I hiked out of bounds off the cat track from the Silver King chair and within 20 minutes found a bounty of untouched yet heavy snow.

Serene and quiet, the bowl eventually meets with the green run Sluice Box. You can continue into the basin to avoid the green run, but be aware of the creek at the bottom. I lost con-

CONTINUES ON PAGE 16

One fish, two fish, it's going to be Redfish

BOBBI BARBARICH / bobbi@vneweekly.com

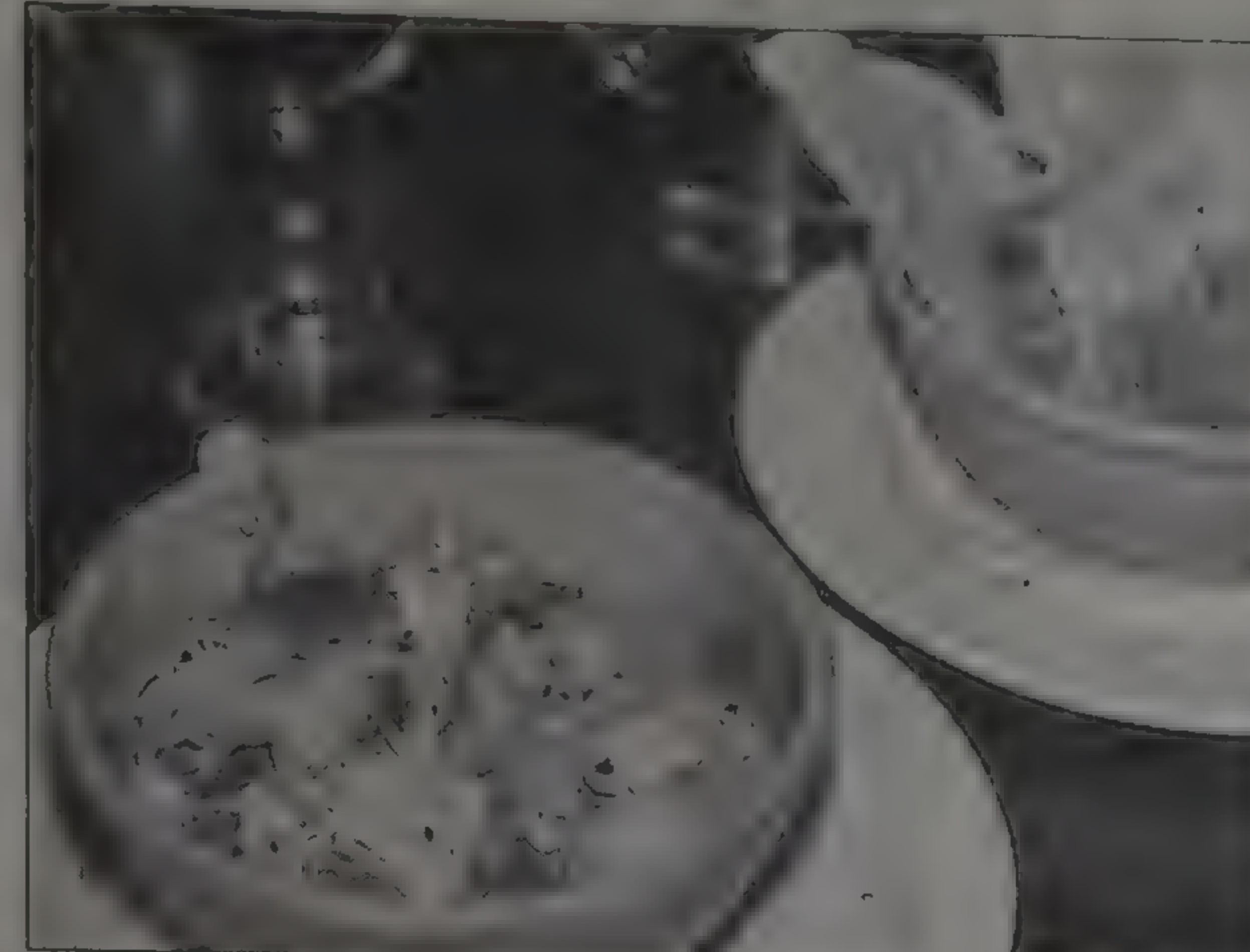
If you're looking for a casual dining experience in Nelson, check out the Redfish Grill on Baker Street. The interesting diner-style décor features everything from pin-up girls and superheroes to African face masks and bohemian lamps.

We arrived for a late dinner, although the Redfish Grill is open for the cheapest breakfast (\$3.99) and lunch in town.

We started the evening with Cono Sur Pinot Noir, a Tuesday special at \$4.50 per glass, and Nelson Brewing Company's Faceplant beer (\$4.25 per pint). Yam fritters (\$8) drizzled in a hot and sweet chili sauce swiftly followed the arrival of our drinks. The four fritters were not as crisp as would be expected, but the chili sauce was delicious.

For the main course, Redfish's curry bowls stood out amongst gourmet burgers, steaks and seafood. I chose a green curry vegetable bowl with tofu on noodles (\$12.50), and Colin ordered the curry chicken mushroom bowl with rice (\$10.99). The green curry was mildly warm and absolutely scrumptious. Generous chunks of grilled tofu and steamed vegetables made for a satisfying meal. Colin's curry, with its rich coconut cream and wild mushrooms, was a hearty après-ski choice.

On our way to the restaurant, I mentioned to Colin I was having a very distinct and ravenous craving for a chocolate brownie with a chewy, fudgey centre. What should be on Red-



HIDDEN BOOTY

fish Grill's dessert menu but a home-style brownie served warm with vanilla ice cream and raspberry sauce. I nearly melted. Forgoing the remainder of my curry to leave room for the brownie was an intelligent decision. The brownie indeed had a chewy fudgey centre and was beyond big enough for two to share. Of course, I did not.

Barely breaking \$50 with drinks and an appetizer, the Redfish Grill was a serendipitous choice. Not only did we leave warm and satisfied, but

my brownie craving was fully and completely laid to sweet rest. ▶

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WHITEWATER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

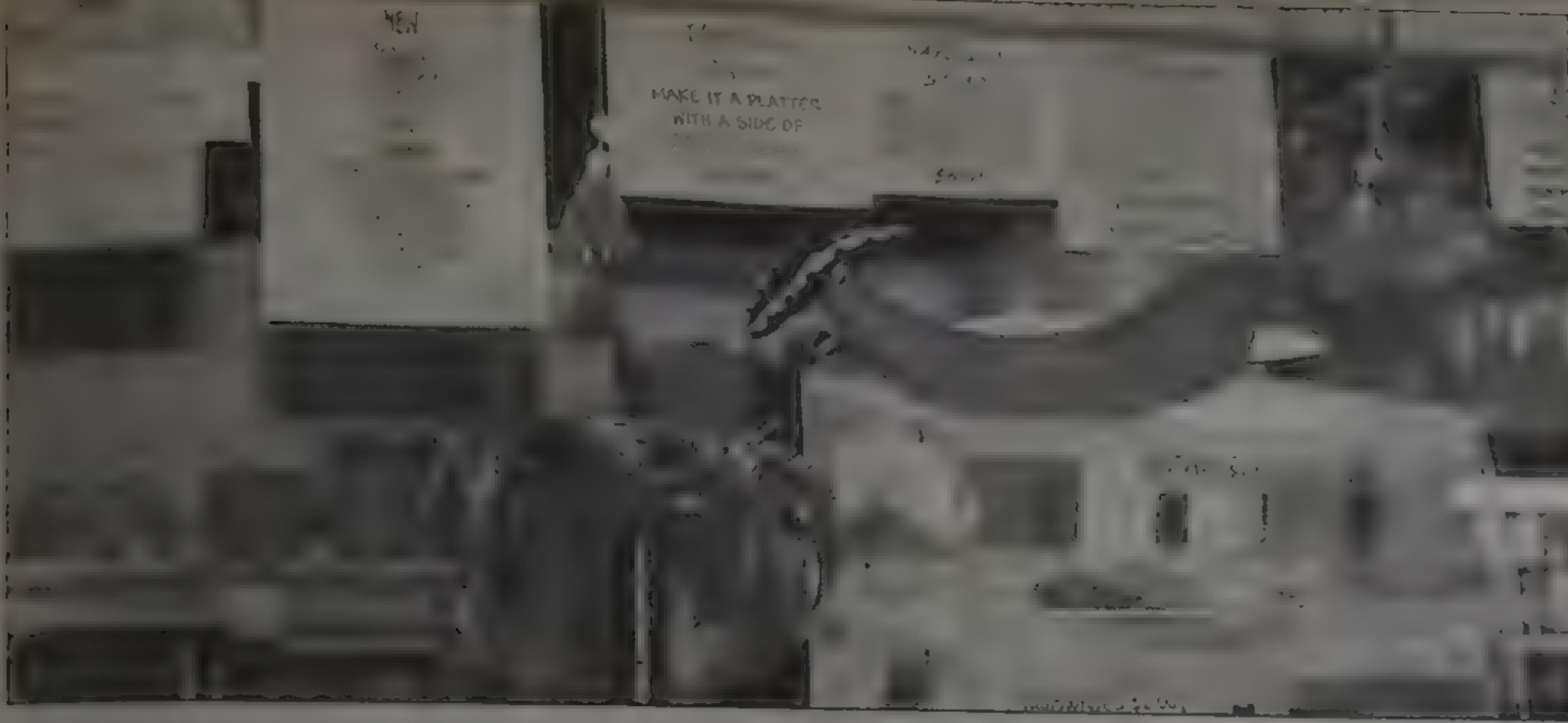
siderable speed once I saw the crooked creek, which came quickly under the mask of fog, and I spent a good 15 minutes trying to wiggle myself around the crafty chasm. Although I am a die-hard snowboarder, there are times when skis would just be so much easier.

Another area to explore at Whitewater is over the ridge straight off the Summit chair. Driving up to the resort, we saw several people parking their cars and hitchhiking to the base. At the end of the day, they were dropping over the ridge, skiing through incredible trees where virtually no one else would go, and hopping in their cars to drive home. I did not do the trip because the avalanche warnings were high, but judging from the number of locals parking along the road, it seemed like an awesome way to end the day.

Beyond Whitewater's backcountry prowess is something less tangible: character. Whitewater is laid-back and relaxed, seemingly 20 years behind major resorts in grandeur and technology. They still have the wire triangle and fold-over sticker system for lift tickets. Also symbolizing the yesteryear feel are the vintage chairlifts. Two wooden seats are separated

by a central bar, from which two small bars fold over your lap perpendicular from the centre. The Silver King chair is actually Whistler's old Green chair. Whistler had the chair for 20 years before it became part of Whitewater's operations in 1993. The Summit chair was also a hand-me-down in 1975. These old chairs run pretty well, but the Summit chair closed mid-way through my second day with "technical difficulties."

WITH THE SUMMIT chair down, it was time for me to meet Colin at the rustic Coal Oil Johnny's Pub. Nelson Brewing Company's Faceplant and Honey Ales went down smoothly several times over before we thoroughly enjoyed choosing from a delightful array of fresh food prepared by the Fresh Tracks Café. The food here is so good that Shelly Adams, gourmet chef and co-owner of Whitewater, has written a cookbook: *Pure, Simple and Real, Creations from the Fresh Tracks Café*. This is not your ordinary chalet fare. An enticing variety of everything from burgers, wraps and paninis to curry bowls, stew and massive salads are available. We chose vegetarian chili with cornbread and the Reuben sandwich, both fantastic and fresh. Folks say the food is nearly as legendary as the powder. For us however, fresh food was a little more tangible than fresh snow. ▶



Follow Nelson powder day with a giant taco

BOBBI BARBARICH / bobbi@vneweekly.com

HIDDEN BOOTY
King, riding and hiking all day at Whitewater works up a serious appetite. In that mindset, my husband, Colin, and I are not ones to balk at huge servings for cheap prices. Sometimes that's the prerequisite.

We were not, however, expecting to be as deliciously surprised for such a minute sum at El Taco. Mexican is Colin's favourite food, but it's rare to find authentic Mexican food. Stumbling across this gem on Victoria Street was close to salvation.

El Taco is tiny and bustling. We ordered from the menu posted above our heads amidst colourful flags, thriving plants and margarita machines. Pictures of Mexican rebels and handmade woven art hung proudly on turquoise walls accented with red trim. A bill for one will hardly cost more than \$10, unless you order from the variety of Mexican beers or mixed drinks. Our bill was only \$25.

HIDDEN BOOTY

Colin chose three tacos: beef, chorizo and fish. Each taco comes on two soft corn tortillas with beans, lettuce, guacamole and pico de gallo. Colin enjoyed the chorizo most. The hottest of the four fresh-made hot sauces was also his favourite, although the mild green salsa was a close runner-up.

Feeling I needed something green, I got the taco salad and a veggie burrito, although I should have read the small print: "El Taco's burritos weigh one pound, so make sure you're hungry."

As it turns out, I wasn't quite hungry enough to finish the massive mixture of organic greens tossed in lime-cilantro dressing with tortilla strips, cheese, black beans, guacamole, pico de gallo and sour cream. I finished the burrito a couple hours later. A fresh tortilla enclosed sea-

soned black beans, brown rice, lettuce and cheese. I added El Taco's own variety of hot sauces. It was seriously the best burrito I have ever eaten.

WHAT STRUCK US most about El Taco was the authenticity, so I headed into the tiny kitchen to ask some questions. Justina Langevine opened El Taco nearly three years ago, after spending more than a dozen years visiting and living in Mexico. Enamoured by the food and culture whilst recognizing the deficit of authentic Mexican food in the Kootenays, she decided to open El Taco with her father.

It's been so successful they've just opened another restaurant in Vancouver. While advertising and competing for customers in Vancouver is very different from the small town of Nelson, Justina is optimistic. El Taco is extremely popular and for good reason: there's no better burrito, or taco, in town. □

Nelson's Hume Hotel restores Victorian-era style

BOBBI BARBARICH / bobbi@vneweekly.com

RIDE ACCOMMODATIONS
While in Nelson, we had the pleasure of staying at the historic Hume Hotel. Located at the corner of Vernon and Ward streets, the beautiful landmark was built in 1898.

Pictures of the original owners, J Fred and Lydia Hume, hang in the stairwell overlooking the lobby. The portraits are the first of many muted black and white photographs on display throughout the hotel: baseball teams, nordic skiers, miners and others are featured on each level of the four-storey building.

The Hume Hotel was a first-class hotel and the pride of Nelson at the turn of the 20th century. Architectural details such as bay windows, inset balconies, piazza views and a magnificent cupola symbolized the richness available in the gold and silver mines of the area.

But the hotel was eventually sold to its third owner by 1912, and in 1929, George Benwell removed many of the distinctive features of the Hume Hotel. Without its characteristic cupola and balconies, the hotel was hardly recognizable.

Benwell sold the Hume in the mid-'40s, and the subsequent owners failed to maintain previous standards. In a state of considerable decline, the hotel closed in the late '70s. A massive heritage restoration project ensued, and in 1980, the Heritage Inn opened its doors. Two years ago, the hotel again underwent renovations to add a rooftop crown and outdoor patio—and also regained its original name.

On the first level of the hotel, the General Store restaurant is where

you'll be served a delicious complimentary hot breakfast with each night's stay. Scythes, wash barrels, pick axes and other implements of the pioneer era hang on the walls. The Library Lounge features the original brick fireplace, as well as replicas of the bar and intricately carved wooden posts as they were designed in 1898. Also located in the hotel is Mike's Place, an old English-style pub with the same fantastic food featured in the General Store and the Library Lounge. A liquor store, day spa, hair salon and nightclub are also located in the Hume. It almost seems the renovations throughout the years have rendered the hotel larger on the inside than on the outside.

With its fine attention to Victorian-era detail, the Hume Hotel is nothing short of charming. And it's even more enjoyable when you see your bill: double rooms start at a mere \$99. □

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Mount Seymour doesn't disappoint first-timers

RON YAMAUCHI / rony@vneweekly.com

It was a day of firsts: first sunny day in a week, a 10-year-old's first time on skis and my first piece for Vue. My daughter Sophie and I were jazzed for days. We barely got our breakfast down. We excitedly cranked the tunes on the drive up from the city.

Fortunately, getting to Mount Seymour takes no skill whatsoever. It's an easy, 40-minute scoot from our place in East Vancouver: across the Second Narrows bridge, up Mount Seymour Parkway, on a well-marked, bare road. No worries.

The weather guy chirpily announced that it is 4 C, but it felt warmer as we rolled into the parking area. Despite the great weather on a Saturday morning, there were only a couple dozen cars ahead of us. We parked just a few metres from the handful of buildings that contain guest services, the Ski Shop and two restaurants.

After getting Sophie rigged up with rental gear (the fleet is brand-new, with Head skis and Atomic snowboards) and off to her drop-in ski lesson, I met with Andy Boniface, the mountain's media relations guy. He asked me what I thought of the place. I told him that I didn't know Seymour yet, but that the terrain park (visible from the rental shop) looked impressive, and that I hoped it would be a good place for my kid to learn to ski.

"You nailed that on the head," Boniface says. Those are Seymour's main markets: new riders and youth who want to try urban-inspired features. In fact, he says, the glistening

half-pipe that I was somewhat nervously peering at is only the "rookie park;" the larger "pro park" runs half the length of Mystery Peak, the busiest of Seymour's three chairlifts.

Locally, Seymour is also known for hosting events, like music festivals, terrain park exhibitions, and the upcoming Spring Fest BBQ. They also

RIDE MT SEYMOUR

sponsor a cinema series on mountain life and culture: the 10th Annual Vancouver International Mountain Film Festival, running Feb 16 - 24 at the nearby Centennial Theatre. You can even rent a yurt (a small tent), to do whatever it is one cares to do in a yurt.

IT SOUNDS PRETTY COOL, but what is the mountain actually like? I headed off to the Lodge Chair to take in a couple of green runs. I was pretty worried about the years of rust that accumulate when one marries and has children with someone who doesn't ski. At least the altitude (Seymour is the highest of the three Vancouver-area mountains) makes for a nice, deep base—300 cm on the day of my visit—so I didn't have to worry about hitting any rocks, just trees and people from forgetting how to turn.

Miraculously, the first runs were smoother than I had dared to hope. I found my balance and edges, and the boots were still comfortable, though I am wondering if I got out all of the spiders. The blue-rated Trapper John's has an interesting steep finish. The

width of Chuck's Place invites people to try new skills, from newbies ploughing furrows with their chins to the twin-tip crowd casually sailing backwards with obnoxious élan.

But a few warm-up runs were enough. Not liking the shade of the lower bowl section, which is icy from lack of fresh snowfall, I made for the top of the mountain.

To get there, one rides the Mystery Peak Chairlift, then takes a short detour to the Brockton Chairlift. Both are duals—no quads at Seymour. But there are no particularly long lineups, either. The rides gave me a chance to fiddle with my gear and to observe the boarders doing their tricks on the upper terrain park.

Finally, the peak—and it was good. In the thin morning sunshine, the snow was soft, but not slushy. Pockets of untouched snow laid just out of bounds; judging by the visible tracks some of the foolhardy or adventurous were walking even higher, into the Provincial Park.

There's no need to hurdle the barriers to find interesting areas though. Sure, the website (mountseymour.com) reveals that it's a fairly compact park, with 24.4 hectares of sport area, a vertical drop of 330 m and 21 trails altogether, the longest running 1.6 km. But the naturally swooping contours of the mountain create dramatically steep bits whenever you want them (and sometimes when you don't: the Brockton Gully sign belied its green circle by point-

CONTINUES ON PAGE 21

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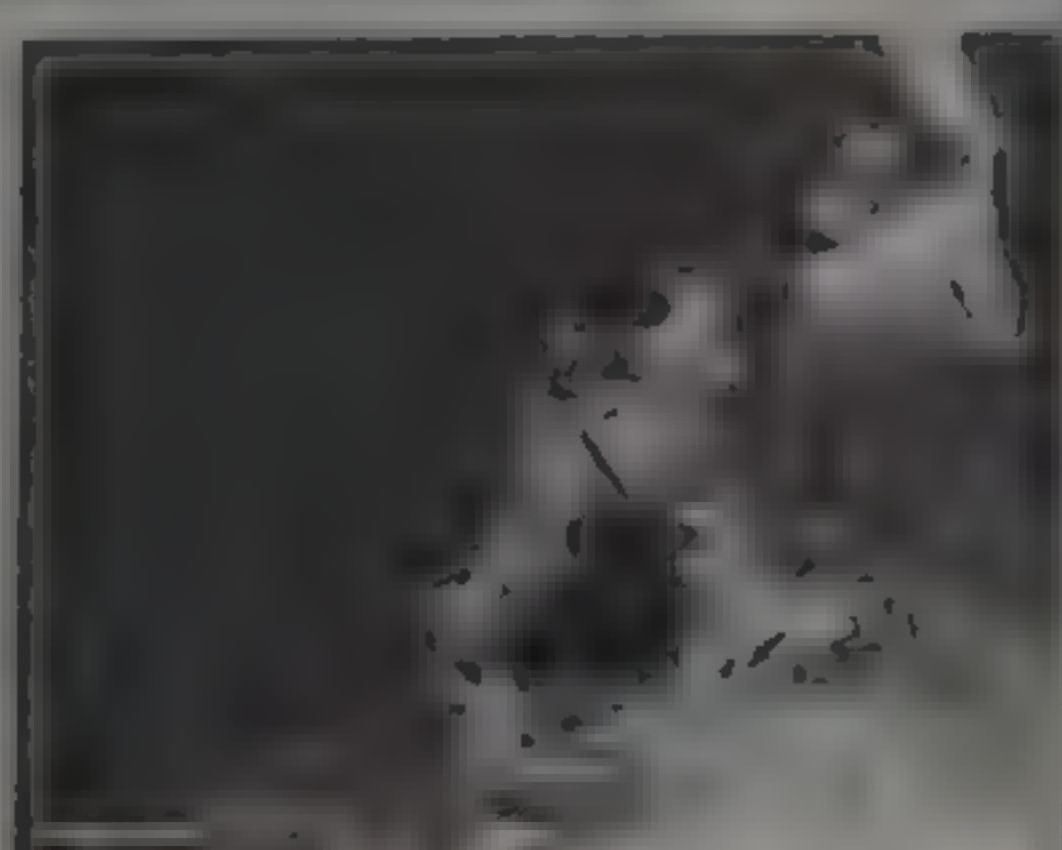
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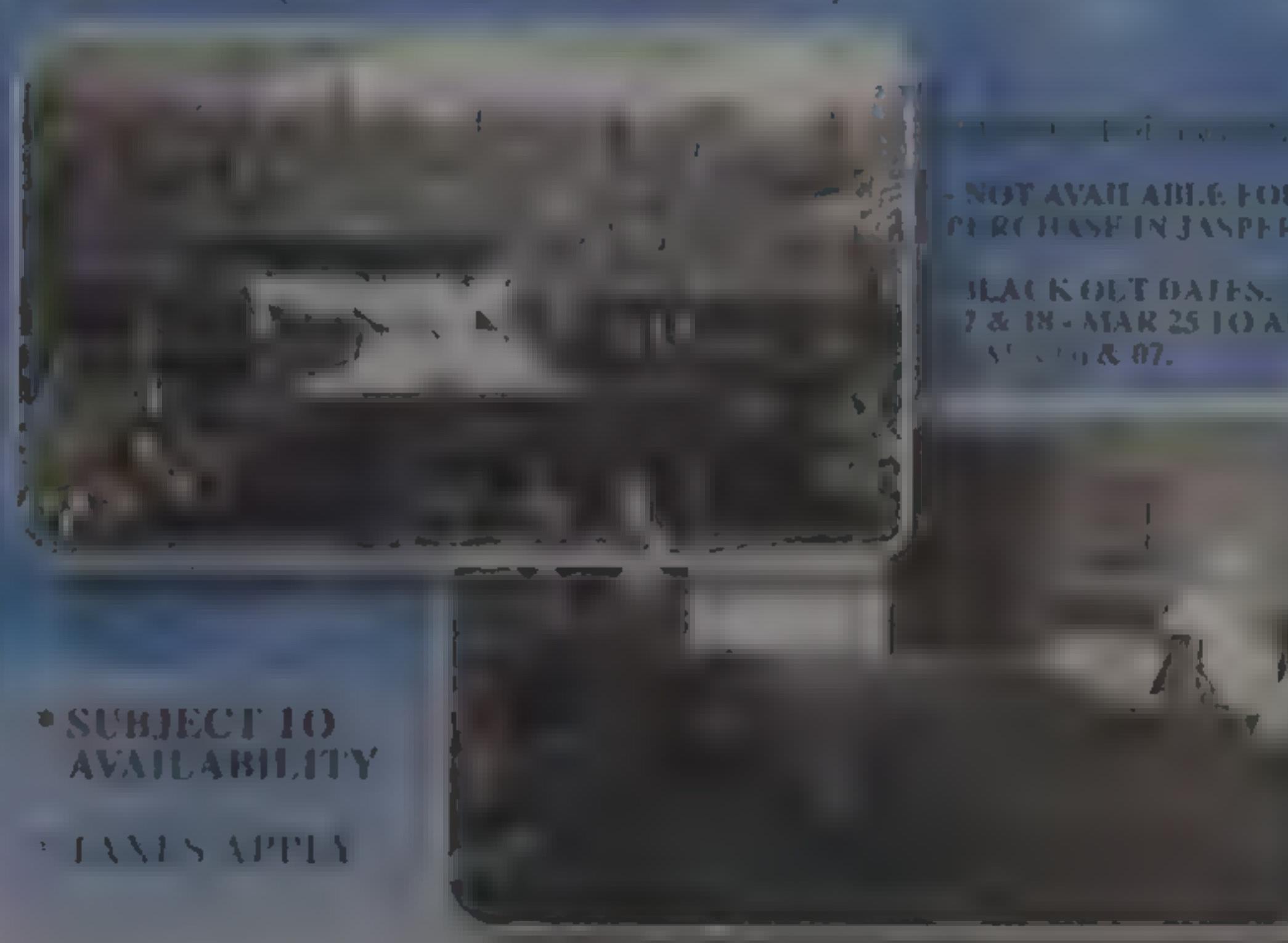
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Ride it au naturale

HART GOLBECK / hart@vneweekly.com

Fortress has announced a limited opening and I mean limited. First rule is you need winter tires or chains to qualify for the road access.

If your car isn't properly equipped, there is a parking lot at Fortress Junction and bus service will be available from 8 - 11 am to shuttle you up to the slopes.

At first, only the Canadian chair will be open but they are anticipating the back side chair will be running



soon. Because the lodge remains closed, amenities are limited. A warm-up tent is located at the base of the Canadian and there will be portable toilets nearby. There is no restaurant so you must bring your own food and sandwiches but drinks will be sold at a small kiosk.

This is starting to sound like a

real backcountry adventure. It may even appeal to some. You won't find any groomed runs here. Either they don't have a groomer or an operator hired to run the machines, but for now, all skiing will be au naturale. And with the pow they've been receiving, that sounds like a good thing. Maybe they can build a bonfire to really warm things up. For new hours of operation, you better check their website at www.ski-fortress.ca. ▀

For smooth turns, caress the bumps

SNOW | SKI TIPS

COLIN CARRERA
colin@vneweekly.com

A ski slope is rarely smooth and this can be a beneficial thing. Bumps and rolls are very good places to initiate turns, especially if the snow is thick and heavy, or if you are tired. You can use any part of uneven terrain to lift your body weight and better enable balanced, smoothly transitioned turns.

I notice as I get a little older, that bumps and rolls are becoming more frequently part of my line down the mountain—not the in-your-face mogul skiing that sends your knees into fits of agony.

but the kinder gentler use of terrain changes.

My first and final few runs of the day are always at about 50 per cent of full tilt. Not so much in speed, but in the amount of drive I put into the turns. Any terrain change can unweight your skis and start a new turn. Even a small little blip on the snow can help get you up and ready to start the next move.

When we encounter heavy snow of any kind (windblown to spring cement), terrain change can be used effectively for getting our skis up towards the surface and ease the torque encountered. In fact, this is very effective in the afternoon on a warm spring day.

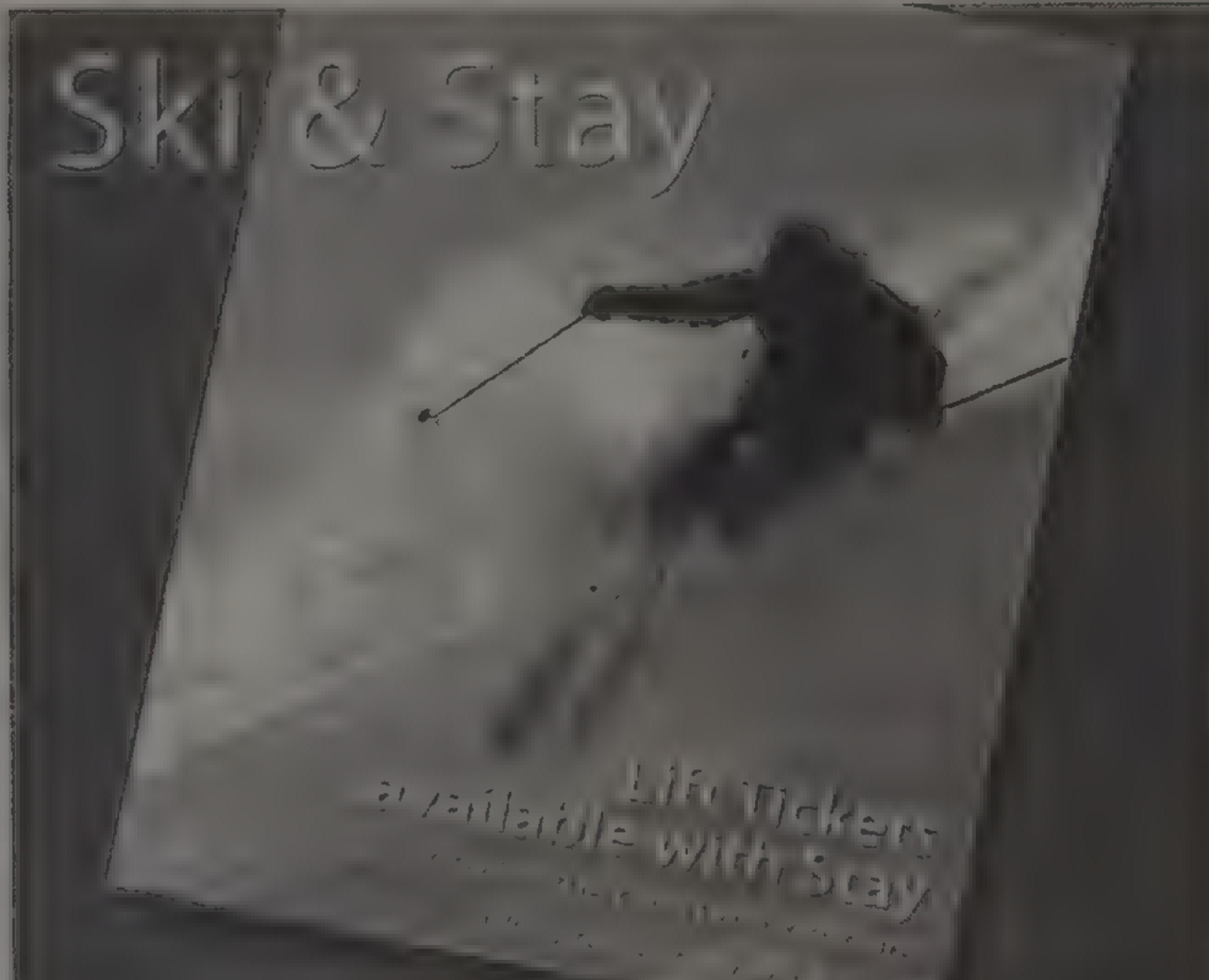
I know I'm tired at the end of the day

when all I do is look for my little bump friends to help in every turn. However, using terrain can be an incredible challenge as well. In downhill racing, the terrain can quickly change from friend to foe. If racers use the rolls and bumps to their advantage, runs are fast and bodies stay intact. Screw up on that big roller at 140 km/h and say goodbye.

WE MERE MORTALS can use rolling terrain as a thrill ride to give us a feeling of weightlessness. It aids the skier in making nice high-speed turns. Nakiska and Panorama are two of my favourite resorts to "ride the rolls."

You want to time your turns so you're coming across the hill approaching the roll. As you reach the crest, let your body weight release and roll over into the new turn. As you come around and the terrain flattens, the increased pressure caused by the compression will make the skis bite into the snow. This is much more evident with the new carving skis.

Timing is everything, so look ahead and time your turn with the roll of the hill. I have loaded so much pressure on my skis they have shot forward from underneath my centred balance point leaving me sitting back and recovering before I could start another turn. This, by the way, had nothing to do with the strength of my abs. ▀



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ing to a shortcut slope that had to have a 50-degree angle).

I will say that aggressive skiers might be disappointed with the lack of bumps on the pistes. Blasting down a couple of black diamond runs, I didn't encounter any real moguls. Cliff House and Stern's Stairway are fast, and pretty narrow, but not especially technical.

On the other hand, Seymour seems as good as advertised for snowboarders. There are lots of jumps, steeps, and hidden gullies on the trails, and the terrain parks offer ramps, bowls, and grind rails (some decorated by local graffiti artists brought in by the mountain).

Handily, I ran into a guy on the Brockton lift who turns out to be a pro snowboarder by the name of Jeff Keeltey. He loves it here, and has set up a school for boarders. After riding all over the world, he returned



to Mount Seymour for love, declaring it to be the best little mountain in the world.

SOPHIE'S LESSON ENDED at noon. Her eyes sparkled as the instructor told me that Sophie's the best first-time skier she'd seen in years—already doing parallel, and holding her own on blue runs. After hitting the cafeteria for grub (it's a pretty basic burgers 'n' fries setup), we spent the rest of the afternoon hitting run after run.

At suppertime, I decided to split, even though the kid wanted to go into the night. With more than three-quarters of the runs lit for night skiing (the mountain closes at 10 pm), it was theoretically possible, but common sense and blisters told me that we were going to be sore enough the next day. Which, in fact, was the case. The next day was spent alternating between hot baths and ice packs. But it was still the best first day ever. ▶

Jan can in Switzerland

HART GOLBECK / hart@vneweekly.com

Last weekend at the World Ski Championships in Switzerland, Calgary's Jan Hudec stood proud on the podium with a silver medal draped around his neck. Amazingly, this is the highest finish by a Canadian male at this event and considering all the past great racers like Read, Podborski, Brooker and Irwin, this is quite a feat.

Interestingly enough, Hudec and several of his teammates are now sporting freshly shaved Mohawks because they lost a bet with their trainers. I'm guessing the trainers felt really good about the wax they were spreading on the boards—unlike the Austrian team, who finished without a downhill medal for the first time in 10 years.

Besides winning a medal there are other upsides to finishing on top. The Canadian team is staying in a four-

Snow Race

bedroom apartment and there aren't enough beds to go around. Previous to this race, Hudec, being the only one who hadn't yet won a medal on the World Cup circuit, had drawn the floor. I'm guessing he gets promoted to the king size really quick.

Note: This is the same race where a syringe in the Italian's ski team's wastebasket stuck a cleaning lady. The alleged vitamin shots apparently were of no help because the highest finish by an Italian was 11th. ▶

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Alberta

Canada Olympic Park — 100cm base, 15cm of new snow, all lifts open; half-pipe closed Jan 31 - Feb 16
 Castle Mt. — 93-315cm base, 20cm of new snow, 67 runs open; best skiing on machine groomed runs
 Lake Louise — 165-178cm base, 28cm of new snow, all lifts and 139 runs open; Teku Terrain Park open
 Marmot Basin — 119cm base, 9cm of new snow, all lifts and main runs open
 Mt. Norquay — 140cm base, 22cm of new snow, all lifts and runs open; night skiing every Friday
 Nakiska — 50-91cm base, 20cm of new snow, 5/6 lifts and 25/28 runs open; both terrain parks are now open
 Sunshine — 165cm base, 26cm of new snow, all lifts and 107 runs open; Burton snowboard demo this Sunday + Monday
 Tawatinaw — 24 downhill runs open, ski hill open Sat. and Sun. 10:00 - 4:30; family events are planned for Family Day!

BC

Apex (Penticton) — 168cm base, 8cm of new snow, all lifts and 67 runs open
 Big White (Kelowna) — 200cm base, 18cm of new snow, 118 runs open; night skiing Tue-Sat
 Fairmont (Kootenay Rockies) — 79-119cm base, 8cm of new snow, all lifts and runs open
 Fernie (Kootenay Rockies) — 257-269cm base, 35cm of new snow, 105 runs open; Solomon's Demo Day Feb. 21
 Kicking Horse (Golden) — 183cm base, 33cm of new snow, 106 runs open (subject to avalanche control)
 Kimberley (Kootenay Rockies) — 89-140cm base, 18cm of new snow, 80 runs open; night skiing Thu-Sat
 Mt. Washington (Vancouver Island) — 284cm base, 8cm of new snow, 60 runs open; snowshoe tour this Fri. and Sat.
 Panorama (Invermere) — 84-123cm base, 18cm of new snow, 120 trails & bowls open; half-pipe is open and in great shape
 Powder King (Pine Pass- northern BC) — 178-339cm base, 16cm of new snow, new Salomon equipment has just arrived!
 Powder Springs (Revelstoke) — 128-288cm base, 15cm of new snow, 27 runs open
 Red Mt. (Rossland) — 185cm base, 8cm of new snow, 5 lifts and 16 runs open
 Silver Star (Vernon) — 185cm base, 20cm of new snow, 114 runs open; 51k of X-country terrain
 Sun Peaks (Kamloops) — 149cm base, 29cm of new snow, 121 runs open; First Tracks breakfast in AM
 Whitewater (Nelson) — 267cm base, 26cm of new snow, 14 groomed runs open; avalanche skills training course Feb. 16-18
 Whistler/ Blackcomb — 266cm base, 30cm of new snow, 88 groomed runs open; record breaking snowfall: 32ft (and counting) since Nov. 1!

U.S.A.

Big Mt. (Whitefish, MT) — 89-194cm base, 23cm of new snow, 93 runs open
 Big Sky (Montana) — 133-200cm base, 35cm of new snow, 3800 acres of open terrain on 150 trails
 Crystal Mt. (Michigan) — 175cm base, no new (real) snow, 45 slopes open
 49 North (Chewelah Peak, WA) — 259-384cm base, 28cm of new snow, 68 runs open
 Great Divide (Marysville, MT) — 68-93cm base, 20cm of new snow, 80 runs open, tickets just \$20
 Lookout Pass (ID-MT border) — 198-315cm base, 8cm of new snow, Mardi Gras festival this Sunday
 Mt. Spokane (northern WA) — 147-224cm base, 5cm of new snow, 45 runs open
 Schweitzer Mt. (Sandpoint, ID) — 130-260cm base, 10cm of new snow; Starlight Race Series- Friday nights in February
 Silver Mt. Resort (Kellogg, ID) — 153-220cm base, 5cm new snow, 63 runs open
 Sun Valley (Idaho) — 90-133cm base, 5cm of new snow, 45 runs open; world's largest computerized snowmaking system (645 acres)

All conditions accurate as of Feb. 14, 2007



The Ice Palace has got nothing on Dubai

HART GOLBECK / hart@vnewsworld.com

Recently I received an email depicting a spectacular ski slope dubbed, "What you can do with money." The pictures were of an indoor ski resort built in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. I had to check this out and quickly found the web page at skidxb.com.

Ski Dubai is an elevated 22 000-square metre facility built 85 metres above a parking lot in a country where the average summer temperature is higher than 40 degrees for months.

RIDE DUBAI

Inside the ski resort the temperature is maintained at -1 degree—except for when they are making snow, then they lower it to -8 degrees and turn on the guns. There are five runs, the longest of which is 400 metres. Amazingly enough, there's even a quad chair providing access to the top.

They even lay claim to the world's first indoor black run so there must

be an elevator shaft in there somewhere.

For pricing, I had to go to an AED to Canadian dollar converter and I quickly discovered that prices were a little steep, but for local residents in an oil-rich country they were probably reasonable.

A single day pass is \$80, which includes all your gear and even clothing like ski pants and jacket. An interesting note is that the socks are classified as disposable, and I guess that's true because who wears socks in the desert? ▀

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Local playwright finds purrfect fit in Teatro

SOME THINK FELINES ARE THE CAT'S MEOW, BUT HOW MANY DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE A *HOUSE OF CATS?*

DAVID BERRY / david@viewweekly.com

Considering how rough life as a playwright can be, it's close to amazing that Edmonton seems to boast about one for every square block. From your established, big-name award-winners like Vern Thiessen and Mieko Ouchi to your writer/actors like Darrin Hagen and Chris Craddock to the endlessly swelling ranks of the aspiring playwright, the city is packed with them, which is its own sort of contributing factor to the hardship.

Given the dense population, the frequent calls to produce more local work are understandable: of the seven major professional theatre companies with their own stages—The Citadel, Theatre Network, Northern Light, Shadow, Teatro La Quindicina, Catalyst and Azimuth—there might be a dozen new local works each year, and those can and often are eaten up by children's plays, collaborations and in-house playwrights. Independents, co-ops and homeless companies like Workshop West and Image offer some other options, but as often as not, they're producing outside work, too.

The toned-down local flavour happens for a reason, of course—Edmonton audiences would miss a lot if we never looked beyond our borders, obviously—but that doesn't make life any easier for Edmontonian playwrights. The ink-stained masses will probably rejoice a little in solidarity to hear, then, that the newest show from Varscona mainstays Teatro La Quindicina will be Cathleen Rootsart's *House of Cats*: the first show in the company's history written by a local writer who's not already a member of the company.

"It's a brand new initiative on their part to commission and produce a new comedy by an Edmonton writer every season," explains Rootsart, who's been working with artistic director Stewart Lemoine on the play since the summer. "I'm really excited they're doing it—I'm glad I get to do it, too, but I really like that they're doing it in general, because there's really no better mentor for writing comedies in Edmonton than Stewart Lemoine, and this is a company that knows how to put them on, too."

OF COURSE, Lemoine and Quindicina could scarcely have picked a better fit to kick off their endeavour. Not only does Rootsart boast an impressive playwriting resumé, including the Sterling-nominated *Make Me*, the Sterling-winning *Mama Mia! Me a Mama?* and

PREVIEW

THU, FEB 15 - SAT, MAR 3

HOUSE OF CATS

DIRECTED BY STEWART LEMOINE

WRITTEN BY CATHLEEN ROOTSAERT

STARRING CHRIS BULLOUGH, DAVINA STEWART,

LEONA BRAUSEN

VARSCONA THEATRE (10329 - 83 AVENUE),

\$17-\$20

the 2005 Alberta Playwriting Competition winner *Abigail in Twilight*, she's also a damn funny person. She got her start with Rapid Fire Theatre, but really hit her comic stride with Edmonton's infamous *Three Dead Trolls in a Baggie*, not to mention, of course, her regular work with *Die-Nasty!*, a nice kind of coda that offers an obvious in to the Quindicina familia.

It's no surprise, then, that *House of Cats* comes across as a pure Lemonian screwball. It follows the adventure of Malcolm Bailey (Chris Bullough, also in a Teatro debut), the slightly sad-sack Edmonton bylaw officer who's been tasked with talking to elderly shut-ins Anna Wentworth (Davina Stewart) and Helen Shewchuk (Leona Brausen) about their ever-burgeoning menagerie of cats. Nothing is ever that easy, of course, and Bailey ends up embroiled in a lot more than he, or the women, can handle.

For Rootsart, the play is a chance to take a look at, in an admittedly "Bugs Bunny" kind of way, something that has a unique relevance in her life, especially considering she admits she's allergic to felines.

"The house I live in now, the woman who lived there just before us actually tried to tame feral cats," she explains, nose wrinkling a little bit in memory. "In the summer, our house still smells like a cat box, even though they've done the whole blue light, spraying thing. There are actually scratch marks up the walls, though—these cats were literally climbing the walls trying to get out. I think it's really fascinating that someone would try to do something like that."

Even more fascinating for Rootsart has been finding out exactly how many people have actually been affected by a cat house at some point in their life. It's something of a stock crazy stereotype, but it's grounded in a lot more truth than you'd think, according to Rootsart.

"It's amazing how many people have come out of the woodwork with stories since I've started on this. Davina apparently knows someone. Belinda [Cornish] and Mark [Meer, her *Die-Nasty!* compatriots] have a friend with 10 cats, or something, and Cathy



Derkach actually has her kids babysat by the kids of a person with a bunch of cats," she explains, taken aback by the sheer number of people who go crazy for kittens. "It's not just a lifestyle, it's a passion for them.

"It really sort of brings up the question of at what point does something become crazy, though," Rootsart continues, noting that she explores that kind of idea in the play (Malcolm is a vegetarian and a computer geek, something the older women just won't understand), mostly because she can't wrap her head around it. "Really, though, most people who have a cat have more than one, but at what point does it get to be crazy? Is 10 cats too many, or is that acceptable? I guess maybe I should ask the cat people."

ETERNAL QUESTIONS about cat ownership aside, the play really is a comedy in the purest sense of the word, and it's been that side of things that's tended

to occupy Rootsart's mind for the past few months. She's obviously got ample experience making people laugh, so it shouldn't be too hard, although she admits knowing what you're getting into is a bit of a blessing and a curse when it comes to writing funny.

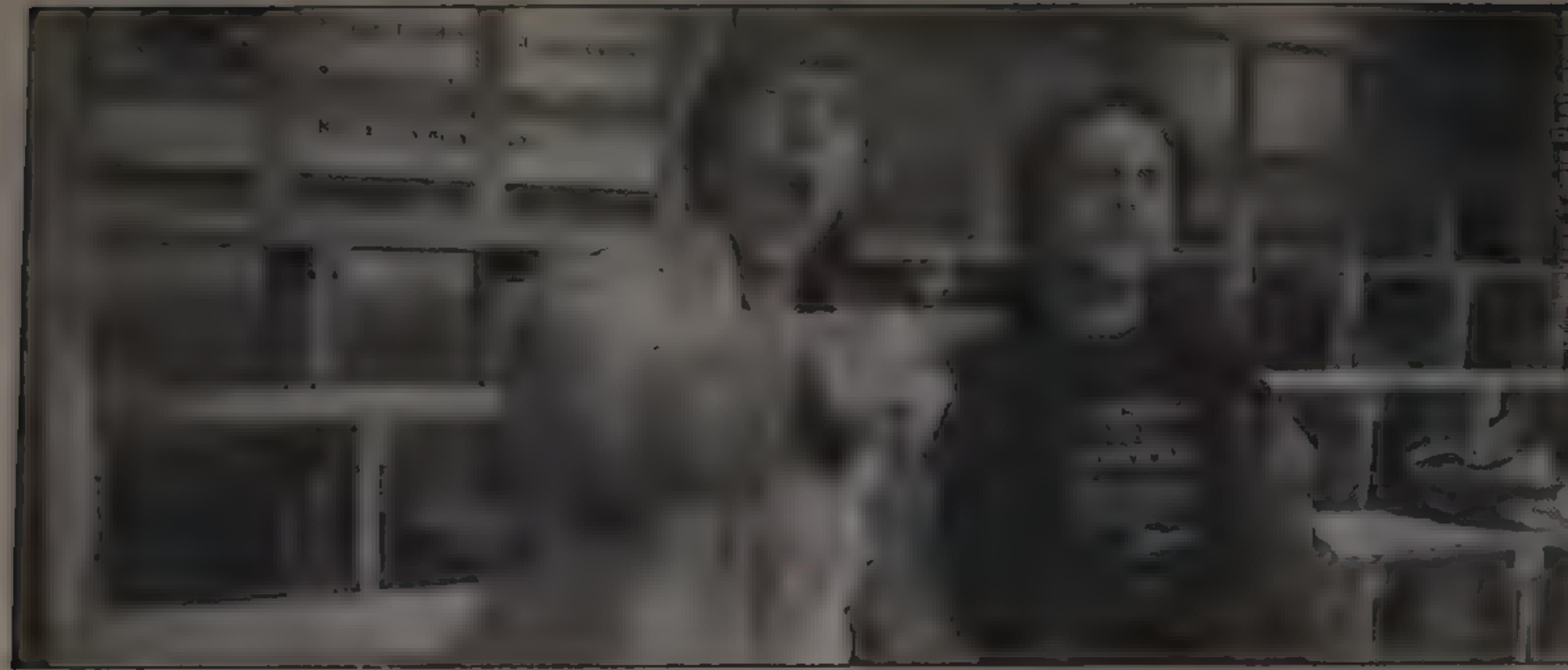
"I've been doing it for so long, I'm one of those people now who doesn't actually laugh at things, but just sort of recognizes when they work. Like, 'Yep, that was funny,'" she imitates with a stone nod. "The only things I really laugh—well, like, to me, *America's Funniest Home Videos* is the funniest show on television, because it's that kind of unexpected stuff that you could just never get away with if you planned it. Written comedy just works or it doesn't—a kid falling over the edge of a pool, or a cat slipping off a tree, that's hilarious."

Fortunately, Rootsart's written comedy should work rather well even in the absence of unintentional slips,

thanks in no small part to the talented crew she mentioned above. From Lemoine's direction to Brausen's madcap energy, Rootsart knows she's put her work in good hands

"They're naturally funny people; they can just read the script and tune into the rhythm of the humour. Leona could see how the jokes were going to go from the first time she picked it up," Rootsart says, though she also admits she has the advantage of being familiar with the Teatro style and all that entails

"I know their audience. I know I couldn't get away with some dark, serial-killer black comedy, but I'm friends with them and I work with them regularly, so I have an idea of how they were going to take it. I could sort of hear their voices in my head as I was writing it, so it was basically like I got a chance to see the play before anyone else did, which believe me helps a lot." ▀



Hockey Mom, Hockey Dad parent many a kid's reality

DAVID BERRY / david@vneweekly.com

Though it's an actor's virtue to be versatile, there's a certain something to be said for playing your type: surely, if nothing else, it's just not fair that actors should always get to be putting on someone else's skin.

Or at least that's the lesson Sharla Matkin and Fred Zbryski seem to be learning: as the pair explains, their roles in Theatre Network's upcoming *Hockey Mom, Hockey Dad* tip a little closer towards real life than most characters they play.

"Brad [director Moss] is very good at casting," chuckles Matkin, eyeing Zbryski with a smile.

"Geez, I was just thinking of that today, that I'm going to have to explain to my son that it's not actually me up there, that I'm just playing a mid-30s single dad," says Zbryski as he shakes his head. "Actually, I've been on both sides of it, too. I remember getting told the exact same things Teddy is saying—or, I guess, yelling—to the kids, and his position obviously hits home for me."

Not that Matkin is stretching believability to the limit herself.

"Fortunately, my character knows absolutely nothing about hockey, but wants to support her son, though she just really wishes he would want to play PlayStation instead," explains Matkin, who's got the whole shocked-by-hockey part of the role down pat, too.

"I just can't believe some of the stories the two of them have been telling me. It's not even the players, really—some of the things parents said. I have no idea how kids get through some of that."

THE VERDICT *Hockey Mom, Hockey Dad* will, as much as *Hockey Mom, Hockey Dad* captures the little vagaries of being a sports parent—from inter-team rivalry to the lifesaving of clutching a

PREVIEW

THU, FEB 15 - SUN, MAR 4
HOCKEY MOM, HOCKEY DAD
DIRECTED BY BRADLEY MOSS
WRITTEN BY MIKE MELSKI
STARRING SHARLA MATKIN, FRED ZBRYSKI
ROXY THEATRE (10708 - 124 STREET).
\$18 - \$25; 2 FOR 1 TUESDAY FEB 20

coffee—it's far more about two people who've both been hurt trying to get on their feet again.

Gregarious, boozing Teddy (Zbryski) wants nothing more than to show his tubby son the family life again, while the quiet, damaged Donna (Matkin) is as nervous about a new relationship as she is about her equally reserved son surviving on the ice.

It's the reality of each parents' struggles—whether it's with raising their kids or just dealing with each other—that strikes both Matkin and Zbryski deepest about the play, and the tenderness of a relationship that grows out of nothing more than staring at the same patch of ice for the same stretch of time.

"Mike Melski supposedly based it on an incident from his childhood, where a coach and a parent were dating, and you can see that in how deep the characters are," explains Zbryski. "Teddy can really go from this intensity, where he's yelling at players and other fans, to this tenderness, holding hands sort of thing, and it all works. He really comes across as a guy with a big heart who just can't quite do the right thing all the time."

"You really end up understanding both of them," adds Matkin. "They'll have a disagreement, and you'll hear one side, and think, 'Yes, Donna, you're completely right.' Then you hear the other, and it's, 'Yes, Teddy, you're completely right.' They're just these real people, sitting in a hockey rink, trying to get by, and I really like that." □

It's not easy being *The Constant Wife*

DAVID BERRY / david@vneweekly.com

When you're looking through the art of the past, it's not all that uncommon to get shocked by some of the ideas being espoused. *Taming of the Shrew*, for instance, has a shockingly repulsive take on the role of women; most of Kipling's oeuvre is so racist Al Jolson practically looks like an NAACP spokesman.

But to be shocked by the progressiveness of an idea in a work from days gone by is something truly out of the ordinary. So, when Edmonton actress April Banigan first read the script of Somerset Maugham's *The Constant Wife*, she wasn't sure if she was more surprised by Maugham's take on marriage, or the fact that his take was written 80 years ago.

"Some of the things he says are still kind of 'wow' moments, where you're just taken aback by what he's saying, even now—never mind what it must have been like then," explains Banigan over the phone in between rehearsals.

"His take on marriage—that's it's basically just this arrangement, there doesn't need to be any emotion to it—for instance, that's just kind of shocking. He says all these sorts of unconventional things, and I think they're going to make some people wonderfully uncomfortable."

Wonderfully uncomfortable is a nice way of putting it: Maugham's play wraps its knife in ribbon and lace, spitting a dry kind of viciousness out while keeping things properly British.

It follows Constance (Brenda Robins), a woman perfectly aware of her husband's (Kevin Bundy) infidelities with her best friend Mary-Louise (Banigan), but also perfectly accepting of it: to her a married woman is nothing but "a prostitute who doesn't deliver the goods" (one of several bon mots the play is known for), anyway, and she's got other things to worry about.

FOR BANIGAN, one of the best things about the play is the way Maugham wraps everything up in the veneer of proper social graces, keeping the characters guessing almost as much as the audience as to what's really going on behind everyone else's bright eyes and big smiles.

"It's deceiving, these people are rarely speaking directly to one another," she explains. "It took us a lot of time to try and figure out who was being honest in each scene, so I think the audience is going to have fun guessing what's actually being said."

No doubt the most confusing character for



PREVIEW

THU, FEB 15 - SUN, MAR 4
THE CONSTANT WIFE
DIRECTED BY BOB BAKER
WRITTEN BY W SOMERSET MAUGHAM
STARRING BRENDA ROBINS, FIONA REID, APRIL BANIGAN, KEVIN BUNDY, VANESSA HOLMES
CITADEL THEATRE (9828 - 101A AVENUE), \$35 - \$70

most of the audience will be Constance. As Banigan admits, her excessive rationality is hard to wrap your head around: Constance makes a lot of sense if you can put aside your emotional baggage, but that's a pretty big if.

"It's almost scary how unromantic and unsentimental Constance is, but really, she's just being unbelievably pragmatic—and kind of refreshingly confident—about the whole thing," explains Banigan, who points out that she's given Constance's outlook some thought, but is fairly certain she couldn't pull it off herself.

"It makes sense to me on a theoretical level, but—well, I'm an emotional woman, I think most of us are fairly emotional, and I know I wouldn't have the constitution to act like she does. That makes her pretty fun, though." □

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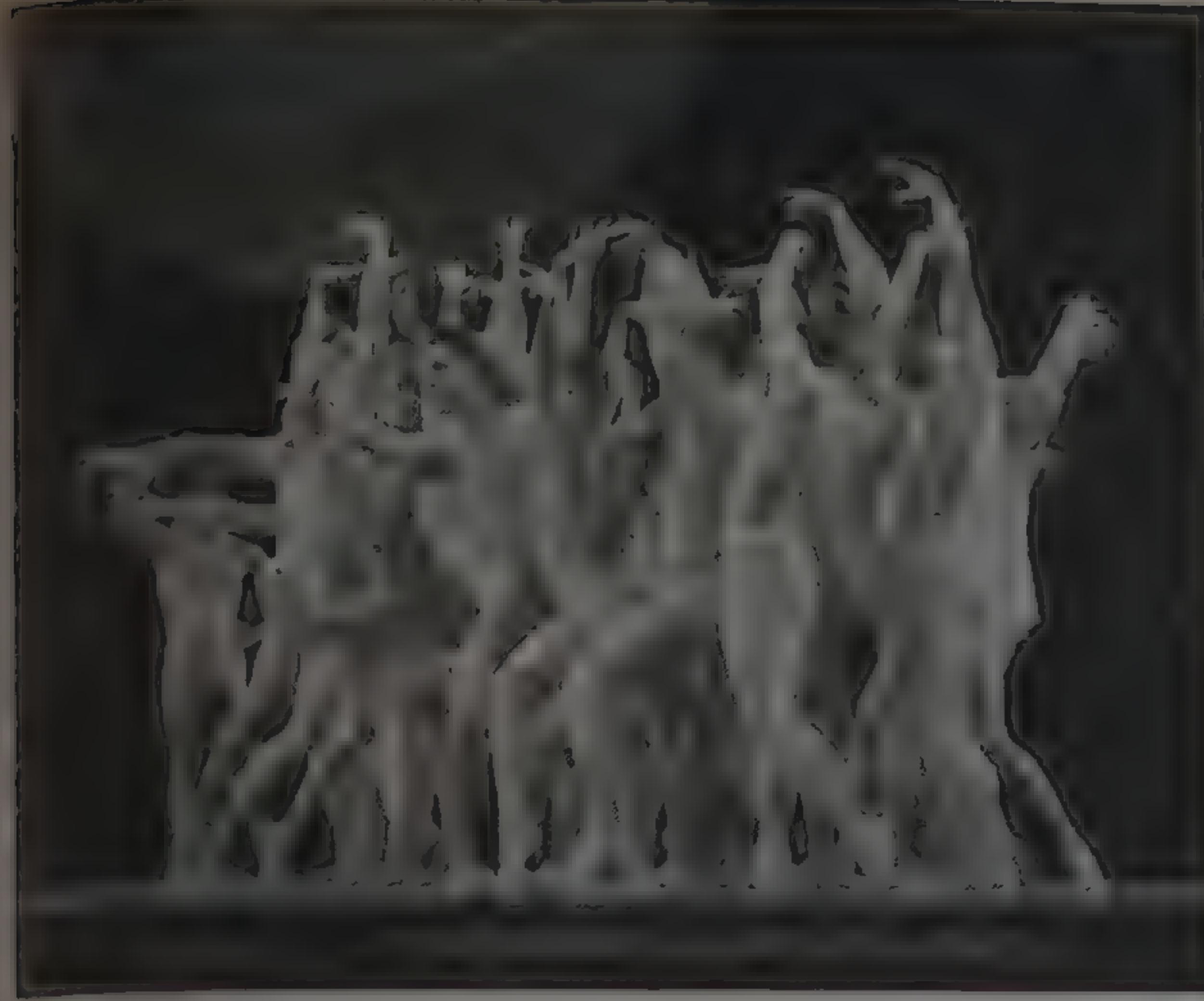
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Dancing Joni trades a dance for a message

SHERRY DAWN KNETTLE / sherry@vneweekly.com

All eyes were on Calgary last weekend for the highlight of Alberta Ballet's 40th anniversary season, the world premiere of a rare collaboration with legendary Alberta-born musician Joni Mitchell.

The highly anticipated work, based on artistic director Jean Grand-Maitre's choreography, and set to Mitchell's music and visual art, comes to Edmonton this weekend (Feb 16 & 17).

The event gave Alberta's dance community reason to lay claim to a world premiere that the whole world was truly interested in seeing. Around the globe, devotees of the music and dance worlds were curious about *Dancing Joni & Other Works*.

However, the pre-show media frenzy revolved less around the "other works"—George Balanchine's ballet *Serenade*—and more around Mitchell, when writers the world over clamoured to score interviews with the legendary singer.

It almost seemed as if the ballet might be swallowed up by the larger attention to its famous musician.

But the Mitchell work, titled *The Fiddle and the Drum* won some very positive reviews in the dance world, proving that the company could live up to the high expectations.

Kaija Pepper from *The Globe and Mail* wrote: "[Grand-Maitre] avoided choreographing literal movements to words, and his choreographic relationship to the music was occasionally stunning. [He] created streams and eddies of constantly flowing movement, filling the stage with eye-catching dance."

"I tried to get into the composer's world, to understand her words and music," explains Grand-Maitre, who talked at length with Mitchell about interpreting the nine recorded songs used in the show, including two that

Mitchell then spent a week in the studio fine-tuning the choreography with Grand-Maitre before the show.

PREVIEW

FRI, FEB 16 & SAT, FEB 17 (8 PM)
DANCING JONI & OTHER WORKS
BY ALBERTA BALLET
JUBILEE AUDITORIUM (11455 - 87 AVENUE),
\$42.25 - \$83.25

She also created a visual set for *The Fiddle and the Drum*. Mitchell has always considered her lesser-known visual art as equally important as her music. Although she once told *The Globe and Mail* that she sings her sorrow and paints her joy, Grand-Maitre says that she's been through some radical changes. It seems that now she paints only her sorrow.

In a bid for world peace, Mitchell decided that the theme of the show would revolve around images of war and environmental destruction. She's created a stunning video, described by Grand-Maitre as a choreography in itself, that will be projected onto screens suspended above the dancers.

The images are jade green, inspired by the colours that resulted when Mitchell's old TV screen partially broke down one day, revealing distorted negative images and colours. This also inspired the colours for the costumes, which are mostly body paint with minimal clothing.

"Why not?" says Grand-Maitre. "Beautiful, muscular bodies are the best costume!" And the body painting effectively gives the dancers, who represent soldiers in battle, a sense of vulnerability.

Watching the excitement in Calgary last week, it was impossible to ignore the more friendly battle for superiority that rages between Edmonton and Calgary. Even though the dance premiered in Calgary, perhaps the competition was neither won nor lost.

After all, Alberta Ballet's roots are here, and without Edmonton and Ruth Carse, who founded the company in our city 40 years ago, perhaps there never would have been a *Dancing Joni* and so many other works.

Peace. v

Thanks to the fearless bastard!

DIE-HARD

DIRTY LAUNDRY

JOEL SEMCHUK
dirtylaundry@vneweekly.com

The Die-Hards thought of the 500(!) times either themselves or an incarnation of themselves frolicked in the antics of a wonderfully particular venue.

But all the glory aside, it was Coliseum handyman Zamboni O'Shae who put it best, while stroking the ice and the years of memories built up underneath it: "I think they're making it all up!" he muttered.

Unfortunately, all the history in the world can do nothing for comatose Dwayne Minsky. Good thing Captain Capilano and radio announcer Ryan Ball were there to hold him, serenade him, and dance his body around the room. And Mitzie was there later, cuddling Minsky and promising him that if he

returned, they'd run away.

Drugs were sold and marriages returned to rocks and bottles were swigged from and tears were shed and threats were made ... so Skeets alone pondered the disappearance of a reporter whose career targeted the Die-Hards' faults.

Tangentially, Diane is still alive and her would-be assassin, Jamie-Majors Capilano, seemed edgy and was rubbing her hands together lots.

Speaking of rubbing hands, Doris Excellente was walking out on her husband because of all his cheating, but he bought her candy, coked her up, and they watched the game together. Laurel Canyon didn't notice there was a game, either; she pounded ouzo and cried over her lack of Valentine's Day gifts, no doubt thinking of announcer Skeets.

As for Skeets ... Hogie bought Cheryl two(!) beers for Valentine's day when Skeets burst in and rambled incoherently.

ly about Laurel. Somehow this touched Cheryl Oogachakka enough for her to want to find him later ... and touch him, but Skeets is still very confused.

It was decided that the unconscious Mirsky should be present at the game against Toronto, so they propped him up with a hockey stick and he impressed everyone by scoring a goal. Captain Capilano scored the rest and the Die-Hards won! Minsky was present and prone at the post-play party. He woke from the coma while being dragged into bed, but seemed a little shell-shocked.

During this party Captain Capilano spoke of the strength in their ex-coach, Rollie "Buzz" Doobie, also known as "Dana." Capilano mentioned how Rollie is a good guy—crazy, wild, etc. He mentioned that Rollie is a bastard (and many agreed!) but mentioned, what seemed like 500 times, that Rollie is also fearless.

Next week the Die-Hards may or may not return to training. v

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EDMONTON JOURNAL

VUE WEEKLY

Stories in End of I. offer a meandering goodbye

BOOKS

HOPSCOTCH

ROSE SPAIN

hopscotch@vwweekly.com

Stephen Dixon has written over 500 short stories. I don't think that's an official figure, but I guess after 400, you stop counting. Jonathan Lethem calls him "one of the great secret masters" and is at least half right. For all Dixon's astonishing four decades-plus of output, I confess I'd never even heard of him before casually picking up *End of I.* (McSweeney's, \$29). I was drawn in by the title.

The question of autobiography looms over every writer of fiction, and Dixon seems to have seized upon a funny way of dealing with it. The "I." in *End of I.* is the central character of several of its stories and is always referred to in third-person, thus we have a narrative unfolding in which the detachment of the narrator is subverted by descriptions of what "I." was doing or thinking. I'm uncertain how long Dixon's been employing this technique and perhaps those of you long aware of Lethem's secret master will find this all to be old news, but it's worth considering a moment.

The cover of *End of I*. features a drawing of, it would seem, Dixon by Daniel Clowes. Dixon's past 70 now and the drawing looks like a younger man, but the resemblance is unmistakable. Thus the book's packaging itself reads as a portrait of the author abstracted through artistic interpretation. Additionally, the title is rendered by having half of the letter "I" cut into the cover, with "End of" printed

on the first page below, carving a sort of pseudo-signature right into the portrait. It's one of the more inventive, even collaborative book covers I can think of.

Nearly all of the protagonists in *End of I.*, at least the older ones, are writers and teachers who used to live in New York, who have kids and a wife who's ill and in a wheelchair and a fondness for vodka and grapefruit juice. This sounds awfully close to a description of Stephen Dixon, though Dixon has made clear that his work is not about himself. (I've always been kind of fascinated by the fact that American writers whose work seems most obviously realistic and autobiographical almost always deny the accusation that their work is autobiographical, while those whose work by and large is more fantastical and unbridled—William S Burroughs comes to mind—often insist that their work is entirely autobiographical.)

THIS BRINGS US TO Dixon's style, which is certainly singular. There are stories in *End of I.* that seem to unspool directly from the author's quest for a point of entry, from his process of recall and organization. Some literally begin dozens of times before settling upon the phrase that finally forwards the narrative. Some linger over exposition until the purpose of the exposition is finally revealed. Some feel like washes of memories flowing over a landscape in search of a canal to give them shape.

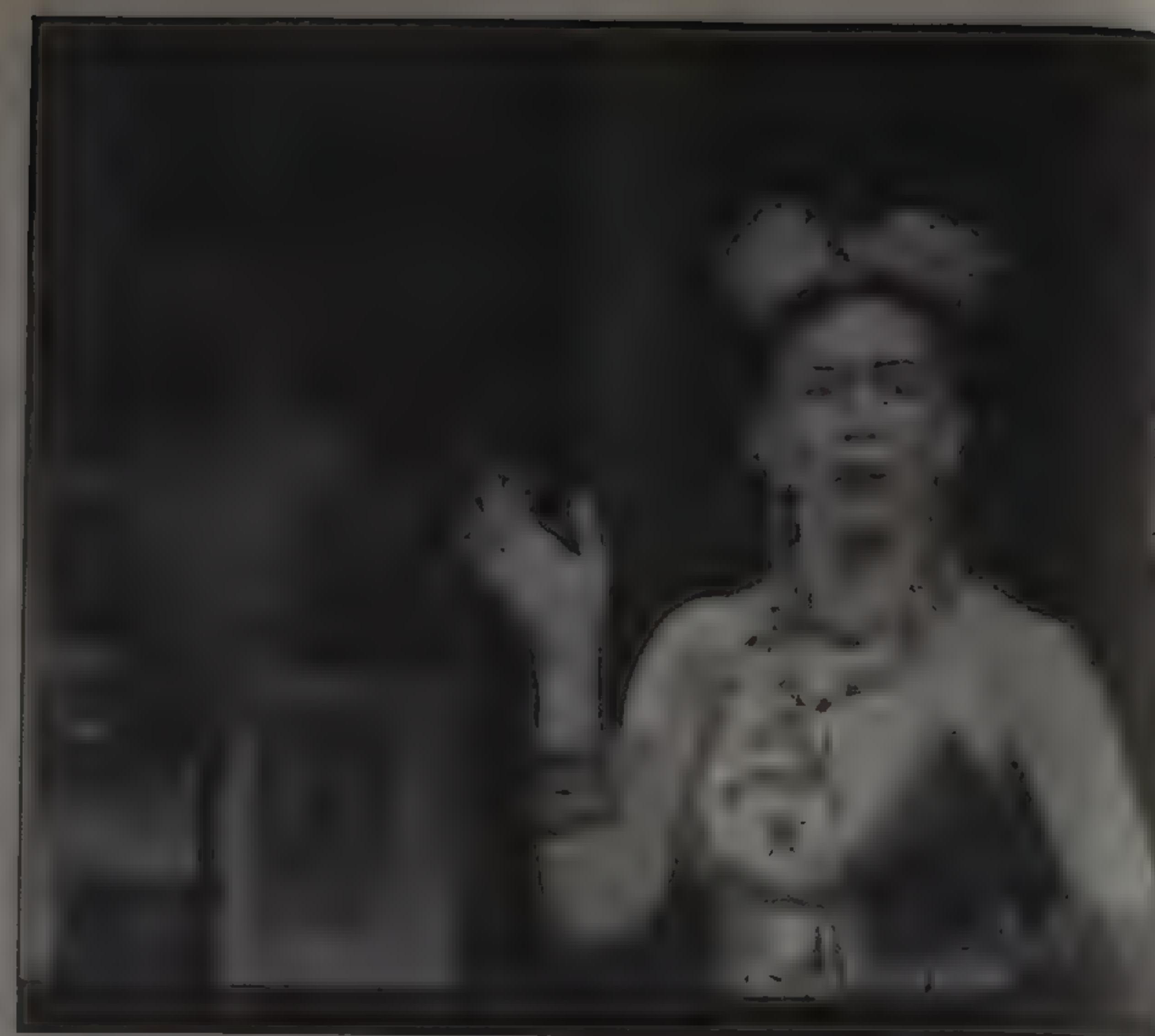
Most of Dixon's protagonists—for all their shared qualities, they do seem intended to be disparate—"run on and spill over" in their desire to articulate

something, to arrive somewhere, perhaps the cessation of an anxiety attack. I'm puzzling over my response to this approach. I admit to finding it tempting to speed through it often, the pages and pages of endless sentences of rambling struggling, even if its rewards probably can't be achieved through any other means.

But then I read a story like "Brother," half of which consists of a letter written to a son by his long-dead father, and I'm deeply moved and kind of amazed at how this visionary meandering yields such emotional power. The father begins the letter brutally insulting his son while promising great stories about his own life. He ends the letter having told few stories and confessing a special love for his son. The father gets from one point to the other precisely by his inability to get to the ostensible point.

The stories in *End of I.* tend to reach their emotional zenith when probing the attempts of the living to come to terms with the dead and their tangled legacies. In "Three Novels," a writer receives a letter from a long-forgotten acquaintance who berates him for exploiting her personal pain in his fiction. By the time the letter is finished, the writer seems non-plussed, and Dixon brings us terrifyingly close to the reality of an artist's ability to divorce himself from the past once it's been ground through the machine of his art.

And maybe in that end that's what separates the first-person "I" from Dixon's third-person "I.": once the story's been told, it inevitably becomes something other than a reflection of life. ▶



Show us a story Frida K

DAVID BEARY / david@vneweekly.com

I'm going to break something of a critic's rule here, so let me apologize from the get go. One of those basic, bullet-point tips you get on your first day of critic school is that you should judge something on the merits of what's presented to you, not on the basis of what you'd like to see: the production's the thing, not how you'd play *Hamlet*, as an example.

REVUE

THU, FEB 8 - SUN, FEB 25
FRIDA K
DIRECTED BY PETER HINTON
WRITTEN BY GLORIA MONTERO
STARRING ALICIA FLORES
CITADEL THEATRE (9828 - 101 A AVENUE)
\$35 - \$50

what's essentially a series of related rather than shown, flashbacks, but too often it just feels conspicuously theatrical, with audaciously obvious touches practically begging you to notice them.

A scene that has Fulton's Kahlo recounting how her first love abandoned her after a horrific accident—one of the few that honestly

reaches into Kahlo's innards—almost entirely ruined when Hinton focuses the spotlight on her eyes and cranks the music: her body is ruined and she's feeling isolated see, but evidently the subtle longing and terror in Fulton's eyes and voice weren't enough to drive that point home.

Hinton is redeemed somewhat when he pulls a nice trick with a watermelon, but he fights his actress by overusing the light/music drama-enhancer.

It's a shame, too, because Fulton gives a nakedly naturalistic performance in Kahlo's wheelchair. She goes big when she needs to—never too big, fortunately—but the real majesty of the performance is in her everyday mannerisms: she downs pills and glides around in her wheelchair with the disgusted necessity of a tough person forced to act weak, clutches her whisky glass like it's medicine and laughs with a joyous spitefulness, overjoyed and pissed off in the same cackle.

Still, though, all that really ends up for naught. However Fulton wants to bring her to life, the play she's in is still just an A&E Biography that can't talk to the one being biographed. Fulton is as compelling and nuanced as the stand-in could get, but the play still ends up feeling like a particularly lively encyclopedia entry which doesn't make for a particularly effecting piece of theatre. ♦

A black and white movie poster for "The Big Lebowski". The title "THE BIG LEBOWSKI" is at the top in large, bold, serif letters. Below it, the subtitle "THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE BIG LEBOWSKI" is written in a smaller, sans-serif font. The background features a grainy, black-and-white photograph of the main character, Jeff Bridges as the Dude, sitting in a chair with his feet propped up, looking relaxed. The overall aesthetic is gritty and film-noir inspired.

Visual Thinking lets you see the lines between the points

MARY CHRISTA O'KEEFE / marychrista@vnewweekly.com

"I would like people to take away the notion that a huge diversity is possible and desirable when visualizing knowledge," Joan Greer offers. "There's no singular approach going on here, no one 'tool' that's identifiable."

Plurality—in voice, in concern, in execution—is evident within *Visual Thinking: The Practice of Drawing from the University of Alberta Graduate Studios*.

We opened it to all graduate students across disciplines—anybody with a studio practice," explains Helen Gerritzen. "The criterion was, 'come back with works that represent the idea of visual thinking.' It could be a painting, a sculpture, a realization or a whole piece."

Gerritzen, Greer's curatorial partner for *Visual Thinking*, is a practicing artist whose magnificent print show at SNAP last fall (*trachea and the hero, and other such stories ...*) encapsulated her own visual thinking process dramatically, generously tracing the development of a body of work drawn from a strong, nuanced theme and tantalizing us with a hint of where she would take it next. As an instructor and coordinator of the U of A's Drawing program, she champions drawing as a practice in and of itself, as well as within disciplines as a powerful tool for illuminating process.

Her university colleague Greer describes herself as "a historian and theoretician," and is a Graduate Coordinator at the Department of Art and Design and an Associate Professor of the History of Art, Design, and Visual Culture. Greer has applied her curatorial mind and eye to several shows, including 2005's memorable exhibit of the groundbreaking album covers of the Smithsonian Folkways archives housed at the university.

Greer and Gerritzen teamed up last year to present a drawing show at the AGA that was intended as a contemporary counterpoint to the historical European drawings that were on loan to our city from the collection of the National Gallery.

Their initial collaboration matured into this year's *Visual Thinking*, which can be negotiated as a deepening of the exploratory aspects of their first show.

THE INITIAL GROUP of three pieces of *Visual Thinking*, visible as you descend the stairs of the AGA into the basement level, are a shot over the bow to those married to traditional ideas of what drawing is about—this is not about paper and pencil or strict representation; it's about line and the connections of ideas to practice.

The first work is nearly as insubstantial as light and shadow, a white square box vertically dissected by many tightly spaced taut lengths of string. Moving around Maria Madacky's work animates the inter-



PREVIEW

TO FEB 27

VISUAL THINKING:
THE PRACTICE OF DRAWING FROM THE
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA GRADUATE STUDIOS
CURATED BY HELEN GERRITZEN & JOAN GREER
MARGARET BRINE GALLERY, ART GALLERY OF
ALBERTA (2 SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL SQUARE)

play of light, space and shadow and reinforces the worship of mark-making at the core of many modern drawing-based practices.

Departing from the crisp blankness of Madacky's pristine form, Jewel Shaw's more representational work throws open the "sketchbook" function of drawing, demonstrating the artist at play with a recurring motif, a disturbing metal muzzle, literally a "mouth cage."

Shaw's piece bears witness to Greer and Gerritzen's curatorial acumen. Relationships were explored between artists as well as within individual practices—during a visit to Shaw's studio, the curators proposed grouping several of the young artist's drawings together, along with one of the models for her drawings. The resulting mixed-media

work has the potency of the inspirational vistas creative forces such as Diane Arbus routinely used to shape their artistic process.

"She actually 'draws' on her transparencies, putting her hands in the chemical bath," Greer notes of Andrea Pinheiro's disturbingly decayed, large-scaled urbanscape. "She's creating a new visual language that way, and using it to discuss nuclear and chemical threats."

The gloomy foyer blossoms into the surprisingly spacious, light-filled Margaret Brine Gallery, which houses the rest of the show. Less comprehensive than kaleidoscopic, it fulfills Greer and Gerritzen's mission to upend static expectations of the medium of drawing.

Ultimately, the show is about line—not simply in terms of delineating space and form, but as links between points of artistic and cerebral consideration. That's the quality responsible for the inherent dynamism in the modern art of drawing, as well as its intimacy—it's a dialogue between craft and idea. *Visual Thinking* lets you eavesdrop. ▶

Complicated *Liaisons* get their due at Walterdale

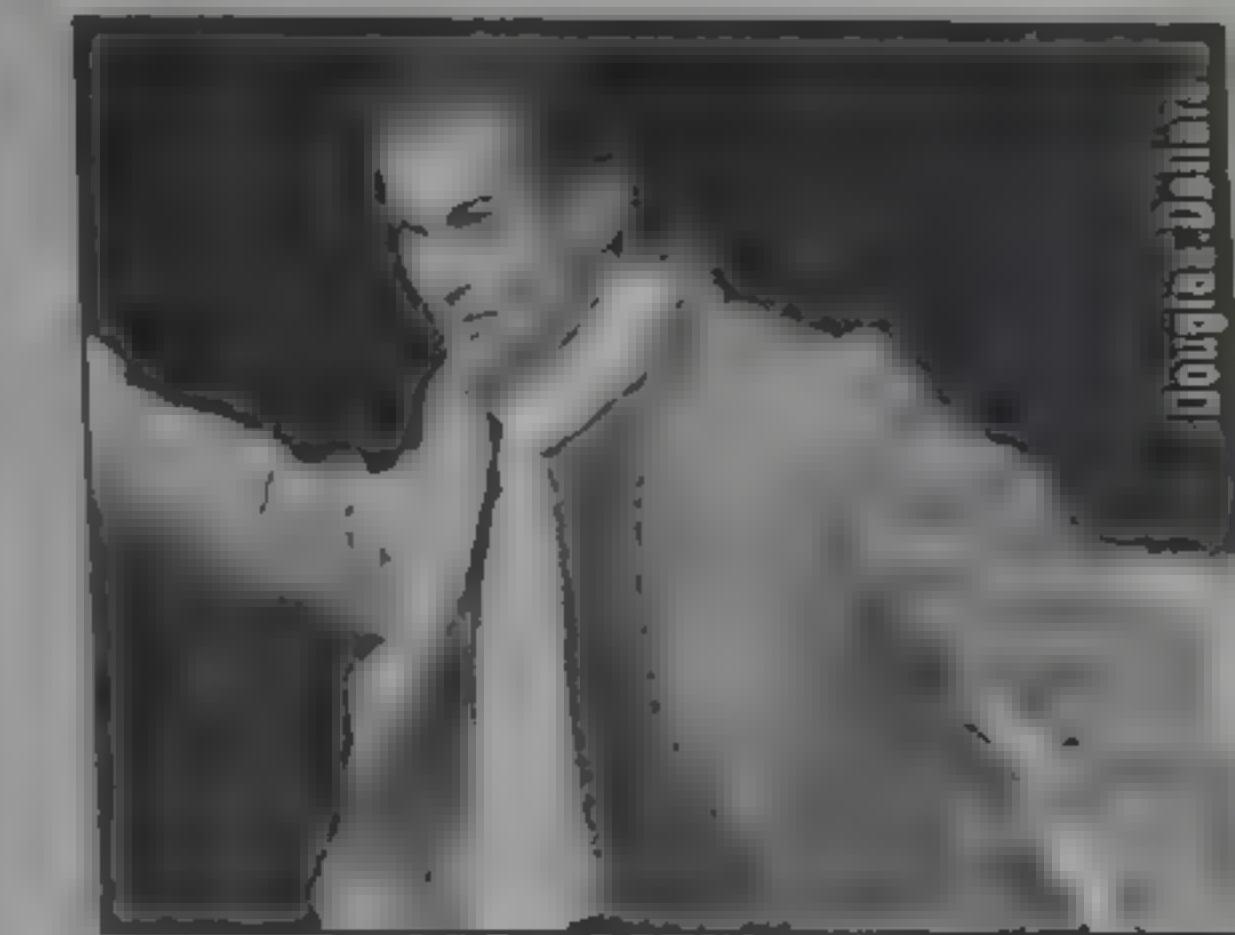
BRYAN BIRTLES / bryan@vnewweekly.com

A ny God-fearing grandmother will tell you that idle hands are the devil's playthings. When you don't have a job, make lots of money and have staved off as much boredom as you can through shooting, playing cards and other aristocratic pursuits, your hands are bound to become idle. In Walterdale Theatre's *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, those idle hands lead to seductions for sport and love's use as a weapon.

The Vicomte de Valmont (Gino Akbari) and the Marquise de Merteuil (Kisa Mortenson) are two French aristocrats and libertines living just prior to the French Revolution—when the members of France's Second Estate were at the absolute height of their debauchery. Together they hatch a plan that would see the Vicomte seducing Cécile de Volanges (Kim Bennett) to get back at a former lover of the Marquise's who is about to marry the young girl. At the same time, the Marquise agrees to spend the night with the Vicomte if he can convince Mme de Tourvel (Laura Rushfeldt)—the woman he wanted to seduce in the first place—to sleep with him.

If that seems complex, you should see the sub-plots.

THE WALTERDALE HAS pulled off the complicated *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* with aplomb. Though the script is dense and difficult, the cast did an admirable job working through it with only some small difficulty early on in the play. Mortenson's Marquise de Merteuil is cold and played with an air of diffidence, which covers up the constant calculations going on in her head. Akbari's Vicomte is an admirable balance of bravery and stupidity that marks any true aristocrat, while Rushfeldt's Mme Tourvel is a milky, dewy young girl whose manipulation is, shamefully, fun to follow.



REVUE

FRI SAT, FEB 17

**LES LIAISONS
DANGEREUSES**

DIRECTED BY RANDY BOROSKY
WRITTEN BY CARLO GOLDONI
STARRING KISA MORTENSON, GINO AKBARI,
JUSTEN BENNETT, KIM BENNETT,
RICHARD GREEN, AIDEN LUCAS-BUCKLAND,
JENNIFER OSTOPOVICH, LAURA RUSHFELDT,
LINEETTE SMITH, JAN STREADER, FRANK TICHY,
CATHERINE CAMPBELL
WALTERDALE PLAYHOUSE (10322-83 AVENUE),
\$12-\$16

But the best performance of the night belonged to Jan Streader, playing the Vicomte's aunt Mme de Rosemonde. As the de facto family matriarch, Streader plays the character with the authority required, while at the same time seeming ignorant to the true inner workings of those closest to her. In the end, however, we find that she knows more than she let on. Streader commands the script to her own purposes, and lives the character truthfully.

Altogether it's a daring, and complicated effort from The Walterdale who is better known for lighthearted musicals, but who has certainly succeeded with this departure. With all the plot complications, I didn't even get a chance to talk about the costumes, which are absolutely stunning. Anyways, you can see it for yourself, perhaps accompanied by someone you're looking to have your own dangerous liaison with. ▶

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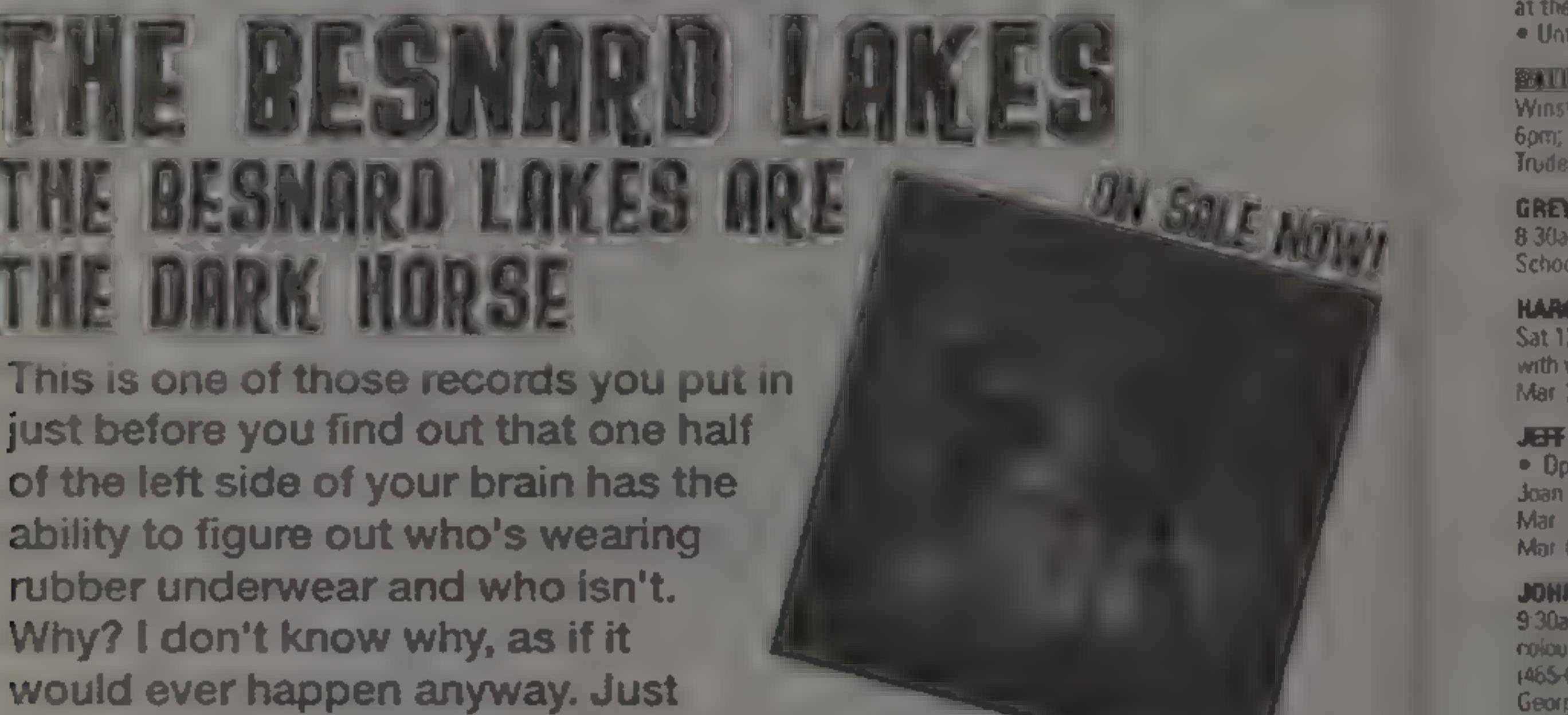
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4. Joanna Newsom – Ys (drag city)
5. The Good, The Bad & The Queen – S/T (parlophone)
6. Various – Endless Highway: The Music Of The Band (429)
7. Julie Doiron – Woke Myself Up (endearing)
8. Loreena McKennitt – An Ancient Muse (quinlan)
9. Rachelle Van Zanten – Back To Francois (rvz)
10. Mark Knopfler & Emmylou Harris – All The Roadrunning (mercury)
11. Clap Your Hands Say Yeah – Some Loud Thunder (cyh)
12. The Decemberists – The Crane Wife (capitol)
13. Albert Hammond, Jr. – Yours To Keep (rough trade)
14. Of Montreal – Hissing Fauns, Are You The Destroyer (polyvinyl)
15. Born Ruffians – S/T (warp)
16. AA Soundsystem – Laissez Faire (saved by radio)
17. The Be Good Tanyas – Hello Love (nettwerk)
18. Apostle Of Hustle – National Anthem Of Nowhere (a&c)
19. Bob Dylan – Modern Times (columbia)
20. The Fratellis – Costello Music (drop the gun)
21. Rob Crow – Living Well (temporary residence)
22. TV On The Radio – Return To Cookie Mountain (interscope)
23. Highwater Jug Band – S/T (hoodoo)
24. Isis – The Absence Of Truth (ippecac)
25. Various – Sorrow Bound: Hanks Williams Re-Examined (ruby moon)
26. Chad VanGaalen – Skelliconnection (flemish eye)
27. Midlake – The Trials Of Van Occupanther (worlds fair)
28. Busdriver – RoadKillOvercoat (anti)
29. Richard Buckner & Jon Langford – Sir Dark Invader Vs. The Fanglord (buried treasure)
30. The McDades – Bloom (free radio)



This is one of those records you put in just before you find out that one half of the left side of your brain has the ability to figure out who's wearing rubber underwear and who isn't. Why? I don't know why, as if it would ever happen anyway. Just come down and pick this record up so I can try and explain it in person....although I doubt I'll be able to. Just give it a listen and you'll hear.

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DANCE

JOELLE D'AMORE A new production of "The Nutcracker" (412-5100) • New York based group perform modern, jazz ballet and West African dance, directed by Sylvia Waters and Troy Powell • Sat, Feb 24 (8pm) • \$25 (adult)/\$18 (student) available at the Adrenna box office, TicketMaster

ARTISTE DANCE GROUP AND CHORUS Auditorium, 1145-87 Ave (427-2760/451-8000) • A world-premiere contemporary ballet, choreography by Jean-Philippe Motte set to the music of Jóni Mitchell, including one of George Balanchine's greatest works Serenade set to Tchaikovsky's Serenade in C Major for String Orchestra • Feb 16-17 • Tickets available at TicketMaster

BRIAN WEBB DANCE COMPANY-A LOVE STORY John L. Haar Theatre, 10045-196 St (420-1757) • Tampa Alvarado and Brian Webb dance to Adriana Davies' passionate poetry with video by Tim Folman and local musicians performing a piano concert orchestration of Richard Wagner's Tristan and Isolde • Feb 23-24 • Tickets available at TIX on the Square

BLACK HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION 5111 • The Afro-Caribbean Dance ensemble Movements celebration of Black History Month • Sat, Feb 24 (8pm) • \$25

THE REAL STARS Jubilee Auditorium (451-8000) • A benefit in support of the Kids With Cancer Society featuring hip-hop, jazz, ballet, musical theatre, modern dance and choreographers • Mar 3 • Tickets available at TicketMaster

INDIA'S HERITAGE MUSEUM 500 10th Street (429-1574) • A BRIGHTER FUTURE: THE GROWTH OF INDIA'S ARTS AND CULTURE • Set 10am-5:30pm, Thu 10am-8pm • MULTIPLE VIEWS: Recent paintings by Giuseppe Asti • Feb 15-Mar 14 • Opening reception Thu, Feb 15 (7-9pm), artist in attendance

PROFILES PUBLIC ART GALLERY 19 Porron Street, St. Albert (460-4310) • Open Tue-Sat (10am-5pm), Thu (10am-8pm) • CHAOS THEORY: Artworks by John Noostheren, Loanne Schecht and Clint Wilson, until Mar 2 • Drop-in Art for the artist at heart! Feb 22 (7-9pm), \$10 • ArtVentures Connect the Dots, Feb 17 (1-4pm), \$5/child (6-12yrs)

PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA 8555 Roper Rd (427-1750) • Open Tue-Sat, Wed 9am-4:30pm • THE GREAT WESTERN GARMENT COMPANY Founded in 1911 and now owned by Levi Strauss and Co [Canada] Inc, the history of garment workers offers a glimpse of the history of all working people in this city. Exhibit features information panels, photographs and clothing • Until Apr 27

SCOTT GALLERY 10411-124 St (488-3619) • Open Tue-Sat 10am-5pm • MUSTAYA Landscape paintings by Arlene Wasylchuk • Until Feb 27

THE STUDIO 11 Person St, St. Albert (460-5993) • ABSTRACTIONS: Artworks by Suzanne Loutas Monk, Pat Waggoner • Until Feb 24

SNAP GALLERY 10309-97 St (423-1492) • Open Tue-Sat 12-5pm • Large-scale prints, repetitive black and white haunting representations of a face by Polish artist Wieslaw Halada, until Feb 24 • ART OF THE ANKARA EX-LIBRIS SOCIETY Small printworks by artists of the Ankara Ex-libris Society of Turkey, Mar 1-Apr 14, opening reception with artist, Hasip Pekatis, Fri, Mar 9 (7-9pm)

TELUS WORLD OF SCIENCE 11211 142 St (452 9100/451-3344) • Explorer Gallery: LEGO® Secrets of the Pharaohs, Feb 17-May 6 • Rob Sather, as he builds an 8-foot sphinx out of LEGO® Feb 17-19

THEATRE 10309-97 St (423-1492) • Open Tue-Sat 12-5pm • Sapphires (438-7978) • ALIVE AND WELL IN THE MIDST OF THE VOID: Paintings by Michael Schoenav • Until Mar 12

VAAA GALLERY 3rd Fl, Harcourt House, 10215-112 St (421-1731) • Open Mon-Fri 10am-4pm, Sat 12-4pm • PATTERNS: Artworks by Aansard Thomson and Doreen Mason, until Feb 17 • CHARACTERS: Artworks by Michelle Leavitt-Djonic and Renée van der Putten, Feb 22-Mar 31, opening reception Feb 22 (7-9pm)

WALTERDALE PLAYHOUSE Lobby, 10322-83 Ave (432-7357) • Art in the Lobby: Acrylics by Angella Powell in conjunction with Les Horizons Dangerous • Until Feb 17, viewing one hour before curtain

WEST END GALLERY 12308 Jasper Ave (488-4692) • FOR THE LOVE OF ART-VALENTINE'S DAY EVENING: Artworks, strawberries, canapes and champagne at the Agnes Bugera Gallery, the West End Gallery and the Front Gallery • Until Feb 22

ALLIED ARTS COUNCIL-SPRUCE GROVE 455 King St • Open Tue-Sat 12-5pm • SCAPES AND INSTRUCTORS • Until Mar 3

ART GALLERY OF ALBERTA 2 Sir Winston Churchill Sq (422-5223) • Open Tue-Wed Fn 10 30am-8pm, Thu 10 30am-5pm, Sat-Sun 11am-5pm • CONTEMPORARY INUIT ART Film/video/drawing: SUMMA TO HAVE AN IDEA: presents a video exhibition of contemporary Inuit film and video by Igloolik Isuma Productions, Canada's first Inuit independent film production company, ASHODNA THIRD WAVE features new work by Shunne Ashook, Sussie Kanneyah and Annie Pootoogook, Ashook Third Wave represents a tradition of art-making that spans three generations, until Feb 19 • FAR AND WIDE Alberta landscapes by David Alexander and John Hartman, until Feb 19 • THREE TRAVELLERS Artworks by Edmonton artists, Scott Berry, Louis O Coffey and Lee Wong, until Feb 19 • VISUAL THINKING Margaret Brice Gallery: Drawings from the U of A Graduate studios, until Feb 25 • Art Bar Happy Hour every Thu (4-8pm), no cover, Feb 15, 22 • THIMBLES: Free screenings of design-based films presented with M.A.D.: Shigeru Ban, An Architect for Emergencies, 200; Wed Feb 21 (7pm) • Family Day: The Journals of Krud Rasmussen (2ym film) Feb 19, free admission • Photography Lecture Series AGA Theatre Arneud Maggs, Thu, Feb 22 (7pm); \$10/35 (AGA member/student)

ART MODE GALLERY 12220 Jasper Ave (453-1555) • FIGURATIVELY SPEAKING: Figurative studies by various artists featuring classical female figures, oil on canvas by Oksana Zholko, Zholko will be available during this time to speak about her work and dedicate purchases personally • Until Feb 17

ARTSHAB STUDIO GALLERY 10220-105 St (429-9532) • Open every Thu (5-8pm) • WHEN CRYING ANDROIDS SLEEP SECRET DOORS ARE OPEN: Artworks by the Psychotic Robot Art Collective, Chris Zaytoff and Tristan McClelland • New work by the Artshab residents • Until Feb 22

ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE 10309-97 St (423-1492) • PERCEPTION: Artworks by Elaine Berglund, Gilberte Gagné, J.N. Vaill, and Linda McAllmond • Until Feb 21

Douglas Udell GALLERY 10322-124 St (439-8445) • Open, Tue-Fri 9:30-5:30pm • Artworks on paper by Dorothy Knowles • Until Feb 17

ELECTRUM DESIGN STUDIO AND GALLERY 12419 Stony Plain Rd (482-1402) • Open, Tue by appointment, Wed-Fri 11am-5:30pm, Sat 11am-4pm, closed long weekends • COLLECTION 2006: New artworks by various artists

FAB GALLERY Am-1 Fine Arts Building, 112 St, 89 Ave (492-2081) • Open, Tue-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat 2-5pm • CENTRIFUGAL IDEAS FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES IN PRINT: Contemporary print-artists from around the world • Until Feb 24

FRINGE GALLERY 10516 Whyte Ave (432-0240) • Venues artworks by the Paint Spot staff • Until Feb 26

FRONT GALLERY 12310 Jasper Ave • FOR THE LOVE OF ART-VALENTINE'S DAY EVENING: Artworks, strawberries, canapes and champagne at the Agnes Bugera Gallery, the West End Gallery and the Front Gallery • Until Feb 22

GILBERT STUDIO 10309-97 St (423-1492) • SEASIDE: Oil paintings by Patricia Trudeau • Open Mon-Sun 1pm-5pm, Sat 10am-5pm • A SEASON IN THE SUN: Oil paintings by Patricia Trudeau • Until Feb 28

GREY NUNS HOSPITAL Out Patient Room, 3015-62 St • Mon-Fri 8:30am-4pm • Artworks by students from the Artistic Statement School of Fine Art • Until Feb 29

HARCOURT HOUSE 10215-112 St (426-4180) • Open Mon-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat 12-4pm • FRONT ROSES: Printworks and multi-media works with video, performance and electronic imaging by Bonnie Baxter, Feb 15-Mar 31, opening reception Feb 15 (7-10pm), artist in attendance

JEFF ALLEN GALLERY Strathcona Place, 10831 University Ave (433-5282) • Open Mon-Fri 9am-4pm • FANTASTIC COMES IN FOUR: Paintings by Joan Chambers, Darlene Schacter, Carolyn Feur and Diane McHale, until Mar 1 • THE TIMES AND PLACES: Photographs by Darlene Hildebrandt, Mar 6-29 opening Mar 7 (6-30-3pm), reception Mar 14 (6-30-3pm)

JONATHAN GALLERIES (NORTH) 11817-80 St (479-8424) • Open Tue-Fri 9:30am-5:30pm, Sat 9:30am-4pm • Serigraphs by George Weber, watercolours by Myrna Wilkinson and Grenda Bevan • (SOUTH) 7711-85 St (465-6171) • Open Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 10am-5pm • Serigraphs by George Weber, artworks by Lorainne Oberig, Marion Barker, Carol Horne Chang, pottery by Noboru Kubo, ceramics by Heather Goldmin, and works by the Alberta Oil Painters • Through February

L'ETUDE GALLERY 10309-97 St (423-1492) • BLACK AND WHITE THINKING: Drawings by David Cantone • HERE THEY ARE: Portrait paintings by Natalie Danchuk • Feb 16-Mar 17 • Opening reception, Fri, Feb 16 (8pm), both artists in attendance

LITTLE CHURCH GALLERY 455 King St, Spruce Grove (962-0664) • Open, Tue-Sat 12-5pm • SCAPES AND INSTRUCTORS • Until Mar 3

LOFT GALLERY 10309-97 St (423-1492) • OPEN MON-FRI 10am-5pm, Sat 10am-5:30pm • Woven figurative sculptures by Rae Hunter, and photographs by Jim Singelum, until Feb 20 • SPiRiT ARt PAintings and Drawings by Danielle Zyp, Feb 22-Mar 21, opening reception, Sun, Feb 25 (1-3:30pm) • Dining Room Gallery: West Art Group, Feb 15-Mar 29

MARQUILL GALLERY U of A Hospital, 8440-112 St (407-7152) • Open Mon-Fri 10am-8pm, Sat-Sun 1-8pm • Hospital Centennial

MCNAUL GALLERY 10309-97 St (423-1492) • Open Mon-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat 10am-5:30pm • Woven figurative sculptures by Rae Hunter, and photographs by Jim Singelum, until Feb 20 • SPiRiT ARt PAintings and Drawings by Danielle Zyp, Feb 22-Mar 21, opening reception, Sun, Feb 25 (1-3:30pm) • Dining Room Gallery: West Art Group, Feb 15-Mar 29

MINIATURE GALLERY 10309-97 St (423-1492) • Open Mon-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat 10am-5:30pm • Woven figurative sculptures by Rae Hunter, and photographs by Jim Singelum, until Feb 20 • SPiRiT ARt PAintings and Drawings by Danielle Zyp, Feb 22-Mar 21, opening reception, Sun, Feb 25 (1-3:30pm) • Dining Room Gallery: West Art Group, Feb 15-Mar 29

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MONTESSORI GALLERIE 10309-97 St (423-1492) • Open Mon-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat 10am-5:30pm

THE MOVIEGOER / 30

CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD / 32

HANNIBAL RISING / 32



Soviets have landed, comrades

JOSEF BRAUN / josef@vneweekly.com

Hard-working men and women, tireless comrades, beatific in their sense of unity, seemingly doubtless of the virtue of their purpose and the promise of success, gazing out toward distant horizons with awe and determination: whether viewed as folk art, kitsch or a sort of socio-spiritual declaration, such images are not only the stuff of Soviet propaganda but also of several terrific Russian genre films.

Arriving this week at Metro Cinema and running until Feb 26, *From the Tsars to the Stars: A Journey Through Russian Fantastik Cinema* is a brilliantly conceived program of mostly little- or never-seen science-fiction flicks that, as the title promises, stretch across Russia's first century of cinema and offer an eccentric mosaic of cultural excavation.

I can't think of another genre so absorbent of Cold War subtexts while simultaneously so geared toward spectacle, playful speculation and broad entertainment value. A number of these films can be viewed as reflections of their Western counterparts, imaginative analogies of modern struggles with ideology, territory, technology, potentially hostile outsiders, uncontrollable forces and the race into space—that final frontier that continues to lure world leaders into dreams of domination. But these films are also by turns fun, hauntingly magnificently odd, whether bawdy or the meditative masterworks of one of Russia's most highly regarded auteurs.

COMFORTABLY FALLING INTO the former category is 1961's *Planet of*

SCI-FI

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**FROM THE TSARS TO
THE STARS: A JOURNEY
THROUGH RUSSIAN
FANTASTIK CINEMA**
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Storms (*Planeta Bur*), though even its less convincing special effects possess a genuine, singular beauty. A small group of apprehensive but stoic cosmonauts land on Venus, the planet swathed in rushing clouds that obscure a surface of jagged rock, volcanoes and an incredible steely blue sea. They begin exploring with a bulky robot that doubles as a jukebox when not going crazy. They hear disembodied moaning and encounter germs, fish, dinosaurs and, well, let's just call them less familiar creatures.

Hovering far above the daring men in the mothership is Masha, the film's sole female and, perhaps inadvertently, most compelling character. She's bluntly condescended to by both her peers and the filmmakers for her sentimentality: "A robot can think things through," a shipmate notes, "but a woman cannot."

Yet Masha most clearly embodies the Socialist ethic, reminding the audience of the greater dream of progress that their dangerous mission is part of (leading to a bizarre insert of Earthly life in the middle of the movie). She also looks like she's really having fun when she bounces around in zero gravity.

Planet of Storms is an entirely satisfying space adventure, featuring ideological conflicts, insubordinations, and questions about the origins of species posed between the monster

fights. Director Pavel Klushantsev doesn't quite manage to infuse the film with a lot of energy (even when a giant plant with scary tentacles is onscreen), but he conjures several memorable images nevertheless, which may explain why producer Roger Corman recycled scenes from *Planet of Storms*—twice!

A UNIVERSE AWAY from Klushantsev's colourful heroics, 1979's *Stalker* is far less interested in paraphernalia, outer space, Socialist boosterism or, for that matter, action.

Like most of director Andrei Tarkovsky's films, it is very long, composed of many fluid, wordless images, and is obsessed with ontological questions and memory.

It is also spellbinding, rich in ideas, visually stunning and pretty much unforgettable regardless of whether or not this ponderous approach to movies is your cup of tea.

A few months ago I wrote about the documentary *Manufactured Landscapes*, proposing that it be read as part of a sort of subgenre, a cinema of environmental alienation that would include *Red Desert* and *Lessons in Darkness*. I should have mentioned *Stalker*, which, in its eerie prediction of the Chernobyl accident, vividly imagines a post-apocalyptic Russia of decay, haze, strange waters and mutation, centring around a toxic forbidden zone.

Tarkovsky's adaptation is surprisingly faithful to Arkady and Boris Strugatsky's source story *Roadside Picnic*, though he characteristically downplays the genre elements and renders several expository facts ambiguous.

The titular Stalker leads a writer and a scientist into the Zone, passing

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

FILM



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Human flesh not all that delightful

FICKS

THE MOVIEGOER

PAUL MATVYCHUK
moviegoer@vancouverweekly.com

It's hard to imagine how the French actor Gaspard Ulliel could have given a less seductive performance as the young Hannibal Lecter in *Hannibal Rising*, but damned if he doesn't keep smiling naughtily into the camera with the confidence of a performer who's sure he's worming his way into every moviegoer's heart. In fact, I spent much of the movie trying to figure out who that coy, self-adoring smirk reminded me of. It sure wasn't Anthony Hopkins—I knew that much.

And then it hit me: it's an *Amélie* smile. Ulliel even co-starred opposite Audrey Tautou in *A Very Long Engagement* as the childlike soldier Manech, and seeing Ulliel hold the corners of his mouth in the same way was creepier than any twist in novelist/screenwriter Thomas Harris's overcooked plot. It's almost as if Hannibal were wearing the skin from *Amélie*'s face like a mask—now there's an image I wish this movie had kicked off with!

Instead Harris sets out to explain Hannibal's pathology with a murky Second World War childhood trauma that manages to be both disgusting and sentimental. (I don't want to waste much time explaining it: suffice it to say that it involves the child Hannibal, a snowed-in Lithuanian castle, a squad of very hungry Nazi collaborators, a stewpot and Hannibal's temptingly plump little sister Mischa.)

Director Peter Webber obviously believes he's bringing a veneer of "class" to this project, but that veneer is very

patchily applied: he'll "tastefully" keep Mischa's death offscreen, but still throw in a garish shot of Rhys Ifans's evil ring-leader devouring a raw grouse and smearing blood all over his chin while amplified "munch-munch-slobber-slobber" noises play on the soundtrack. Webber might show us someone getting a knife shoved through his head, but at least he'll light the frames like a 17th-century Dutch painting. (Webber also directed *Girl With a Pearl Earring*, a similarly humourless gouache of pretension and pulp that was my pick for the worst movie of 2003.)

If nothing else, Ulliel's unimaginative characterization makes you remember how fresh and vivid Anthony Hopkins was playing Lecter in *Silence of the Lambs*. Perhaps Ulliel is hampered by having to perform in English—he doesn't have the ear for the playful, theatrical cadences Hopkins brought to the part, the music he brings to even a simple line like "Hello, Clarice," his voice dipping low on her name and almost swallowing it whole. Or his flat, nasal pronunciation of the word "Chianti" in his famous line about the fava beans and the census-taker's liver—a sophisticate sneering at every boob he's ever heard stumble over the foreign words on a restaurant wine list.

It's this side of Hannibal that Thomas Harris seems increasingly fascinated by—Hannibal the aesthete, the connoisseur of fine dining and classic art and architecture. (In *Hannibal Rising*, Gong Li plays Hannibal's aunt, "Lady Murasaki," a pointless reference to the author of *The Tale of Genji* that only emphasizes the gap between Harris's highbrow ambitions and his actual achievements.

A similar thing happens when Webber

stages a scene at "Castle Vigo.") Who is Harris trying to impress? Doesn't he realize that audiences are lured to *Hannibal* movies by the same thing that lures them to the *Saw* and *Final Destination* sequels: these films contain the most memorably grotesquely imaginative deaths around, and we keep hoping that they'll figure out a way to top themselves. Harris may not like to hear it, but all that talk about Renaissance art and the best way to roast animal cheeks? All that mystical hugger-mugger about the symbolism of cannibalism? That's what we sit through in order to get to the good stuff.

Believe me, there's nothing transcendent about eating human flesh. A few nights before I went to see *Hannibal Rising*, I went bar-hopping while wearing too-tight pair of shoes and developed a blister on my heel. A day later, it burst, leaving a flap of skin hanging there, about the size and thickness of a thumbnail. I began playing idly with that flap ... I watched *Hannibal Rising* and somewhere during one of the many scenes of Gong Li looking expressionlessly at her sinister nephew, I accidentally tore it off.

The movie was so obsessed with cannibalism that I decided to see what all the fuss was about and impulsively popped it into my mouth. Yeah. Disgusting. The skin felt vaguely waxy, with small ridges, the texture of fingerprints that I could make out with my tongue. I chewed it up into flavourless shreds between my incisors and swallowed, washing it down with the last of my pop. I swear, I just don't see what the big deal about cannibalism is—and *Hannibal Rising* didn't give me any clues.

Maybe if I'd drunk a nice Chianti instead? ▀

TSARS TO STARS

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

through a number of traps on their quest to enter a room in which wishes are said to be fulfilled, and all is realized in a vision indebted to Dante, Bosch, Bresson and The Gospels rather than Edgar Rice Burroughs or Arthur C Clarke (especially Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of Clarke's *2001*, which so incensed Tarkovsky for its coldness and which prompted his earlier sci-fi masterpiece *Solaris* as a response).

SWINGING US BACK into convention and ideological correctness is 1981's *To the Stars by Hard Ways* (*Cherez Ternii K Zvezdam*), but it does so very inventively and, curiously, also holds tightly to the theme of ecological catastrophe.

It opens with the discovery of a drifting spacecraft, all but abandoned save a telekinetic, teleporting, ivory-haired amnesiac android named Niya, a fetching humanoid with enormous, sleepy, sad eyes.

Niya's taken home to the fractured family of a scientist, who live in an idyllic country manor where the housekeeping is done by a boxy robot who plays a mean game of tennis. There, Niya's treated as an equal, a family member (inspiration for *ALF*) beguiling the scientist's neglected son, who introduces her to Earthly delights, such as swimming in the sea. Yet Niya is plagued by flashbacks of oily rivers and smog-choked landscapes, all of which hint at the sick planet where the busy final act of *To the Stars* takes place amidst uprisings and political corruption.

Yelena Metyolkina gives a surprisingly detailed and emotionally pointed performance as Niya, considering the material. There's a lovely scene where she tries on wigs. The whole thing eventually builds up to an intergalactic action-drama resembling a rousing episode of *Star Trek*, but I was most taken with the earlier scenes in which Niya tries to find a sense of self on our still pristine looking planet and confronts smaller questions of the ethics of control and what it is to be human.

Those are the films I've seen. There's also *The Heaven's Call*, about rival space probes crash landing on an asteroid, and *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, based on a Nikolai Gogol story. And that's only the first week! Here's hoping glory of Russian People finds new audience in decadent West. These are rare gems, comrade. ▀

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FILM WEEKLY

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All showtimes are subject to change at any time. Please contact theatre for confirmation.

CHASE THEATRE-JASPER

6094 Connaught Dr., Jasper, 852-4749

THE QUEEN (PG) Fri Sat 7:00, 9:00; Sun-Thu 8:00

EPIC MOVIE (14A) Fri Sat 7:00, 9:00; Sun-Thu 8:00

CINEMA CITY 12 MOVIES 12

Cinema 12: 3633-99 St. 463-5481

THE DEPARTED (18A, coarse language, violence)

Daily 1:10, 4:20, 7:25, Fri-Sat late show 11:05

ROCKY BALBOA (PG) Sat-Sun 11:15, Daily 1:45, 4:25, 7:15, 9:40, Fri-Sat late show 12:25

APOCALYPTO (14A, gory scenes, brutal violence)

Daily 12:55, 3:45, 6:45, 9:20; Fri Sat late

show 12:00

THE HOLIDAY (PG, not recommended for

young children) Daily 1:00, 3:50, 6:40, 9:25, Fri-

Sat late show 12:00

HAPPILY N'EVER AFTER (G) Sat Sun 11:05,

Daily 1:05, 3:05, 5:10, 7:35, 9:45, Fri-Sat late

show 11:50, Kids Kabin Fever: 1:05

BORAT (14A, coarse language, sexual content,

crude content, not recommended for children)

Sat-Sun 11:10; Daily 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:30,

10:05, Fri-Sat late show 11:55

OPEN SEASON (G) Sat, Sun, Mon 12:00, 2:10,

4:15

THE PRESTIGE (14A) Fri Tue-Thu 1:30, 4:15,

Sat, Sun, Mon 7:10, 9:55

STRANGER THAN FICTION (PG) Sat Sun

11:30, Daily 2:00, 4:35, 7:20, 9:50; Fri-Sat late

show 12:15

THE GOOD SHEPARD (14A) Daily 12:50, 4:00,

7:25, Fri-Sat late show 11:00

FLUSHED AWAY (G) Sat-Sun 11:25, Daily 1:40,

3:55, 7:05, 9:15, Fri-Sat late show 11:40

WE ARE MARSHALL (PG) Daily 1:20, 4:35, 6:55,

9:30, Fri-Sat late show 12:05

DEJA VU (14A) Sat-Sun 10:50; Daily 1:25, 4:10,

7:00, 9:35, Fri-Sat late show 12:10

THE DEPARTED (18A, coarse language, violence)

Daily 1:15, 4:20, 7:40; Fri-Sat late show 10:45

APOCALYPTO (14A, gory scenes, brutal violence)

Daily 1:05, 3:50, 6:40, 9:25, Fri-Sat late show 12:00

ROCKY BALBOA (PG) Sat-Sun 11:15, Daily 1:40,

4:45, 7:25, 9:55, Fri-Sat late show 12:20

BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE (14A, gory scenes,

brutal violence) Sat-Sun 11:35, Daily 4:25, 10:05,

Fri-Sat late show 12:25

THE GOOD GERMAN (14A, coarse language)

Fri, Tue-Thu 11:20, 1:50, 4:50, 7:35, 10:00, Fri-Sat

late show 12:20; Sat, Sun, Mon 7:35, 10:00

HAPPILY N' EVER AFTER (G) Sat Sun 11:25; Daily

1:55, 4:30, 7:05, 9:10; Fri-Sat late show 11:20; Kids

Kabin Fever: 1:55

THE HOLIDAY (PG, not recommended for young

children) Sat-Sun 10:50; Daily 1:30, 4:10, 6:55, 9:35,

Fri-Sat late show 12:05

BORAT (14A, coarse language, sexual content,

crude content, not recommended for children)

Sat-Sun 11:10; Daily 1:15, 3:20, 5:15, 7:30, 9:45, Fri-

Sat late show 12:05

STRANGER THAN FICTION (PG) Sat-Sun 11:30,

Daily 2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 9:50; Fri-Sat late show 12:15

OPEN SEASON (G) Sat, Sun, Mon 11:15, 1:10,

4:15

THE GOOD SHEPARD (14A) Daily 1:00, 6:30, Fri

Sat late show 11:05

FLUSHED AWAY (G) Sat-Sun 11:00; Daily 1:05,

3:10, 5:10, 7:15, 9:15, Fri-Sat late show 11:30

WE ARE MARSHALL (PG) Daily 1:20, 4:05, 6:50,

9:30; Fri-Sat late show 12:05 No 1:20 show on Fri

12:00

DEJA VU (14A) Sat-Sun 10:55, Daily 1:35, 4:15,

7:00, 9:40; Fri-Sat late show 12:10

CITY CENTRE

8:15, 10:15, 12:15, 2:15, 4:15, 6:15, 8:15, 10:15

PAN'S LABYRINTH (14A, brutal violence, not recom-

mended for children, Spanish subtitles) Daily

12:00, 2:15, 4:30, 6:45, 8:45, 10:45

GHOST RIDER (14A) Daily 1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 9:00

ALPHA DOG (18A, coarse language) Daily 7:10,

9:10

MUSIC AND LYRICS (PG) Daily 1:20, 4:20, 7:10,

9:10

SMOKIN' ACES (18A, gory violence, brutal violence)

Digital (PG) Daily 7:15, 9:45, Sat Mon 1:15, 3:15,

7:30, 9:10

DREAMGIRLS (PG, coarse language, mature

themes) Daily 12:30, 3:30, 6:35, 9:25

HANNIBAL RISING (18A, gory scenes, brutal violence)

Daily 1:10, 4:10, 6:45, 9:15

NORBUT (PG, sexual content, crude content, not recommended for children) Daily 1:30, 4:30, 7:20

9:45, Mon 2:30, 5:00, 7:00, 9:40, Tue-Thu 7:00,

9:45

THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND (18A, gory

scenes, subtitled) Daily 1:30, 4:30, 7:20

9:45

WATER (PG, mature themes, not recommended for

children) Sun 1:40

CLAREVIEW

8:15, 10:15, 12:15, 2:15, 4:15, 6:15, 8:15, 10:15

GHOST RIDER (14A) Fri-Mon 2:00, 4:30, 7:15,

9:45, Tue-Thu 4:30, 7:15, 9:45

BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA (PG, may frighten young

children) Fri-Mon 1:00, 3:30, 7:00, 9:30, Tue-Thu

7:00, 9:10, 4:50

MUSIC AND LYRICS (PG) Fri-Mon 1:45, 4:05,

6:50, 9:20, Tue-Thu 4:05, 6:50, 9:20

HANNIBAL RISING (18A, gory scenes, brutal violence)

Digital (PG) Daily 1:25, 3:55, 6:55, 9:55, Tue-Thu

7:25, 9:55

NORBUT (PG, sexual content, crude content, not recommended for children) Fri-Mon 1:15, 4:20, 6:45,

7:45, 10:00; Tue-Thu 5:00, 7:45, 10:00

THE HOLIDAY (PG, not recommended for

young children) Daily 1:00, 3:45, 6:45, 9:45, Fri-Sat

late show 12:00

OPEN SEASON (G) Sat, Sun, Mon 12:00, 2:10,

4:15

THE PRESTIGE (14A) Fri Tue-Thu 1:30, 4:15,

Sat, Sun, Mon 7:10, 9:55

STRANGER THAN FICTION (PG) Sat Sun

11:30, Daily 2:00, 4:35, 7:20, 9:50; Fri-Sat late

show 12:15

EPIC MOVIE (14A) Fri Sat 7:00, 9:00; Sun-Thu

8:00, 10:00, 12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00

CHARLOTTE'S WEB (G) Sat-Mon 1:20, 3:30

CLAREVIEW

8:15, 10:15, 12:15, 2:15, 4:15, 6:15, 8:15, 10:15

GHOST RIDER (14A) Fri-Tue 6:45, 9:15

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY (PG)

Digital (PG) Daily 1:15, 3:45, 6:15, 8:45, 10:45

THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND (18A, gory

scenes, subtitled) Daily 1:15, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30, Tue-Thu

7:00, 9:10, 4:50

</div

In talking to the camera, *Conversations with God* mumbles

CAROLYN NIKODYM / carolyn@vneweekly.com

In a weird case of serendipity, I was flipping through one of those free alternative health magazines a couple of days before I sat down to watch *Conversations with God*, and there was this interview with Neale Donald Walsch.

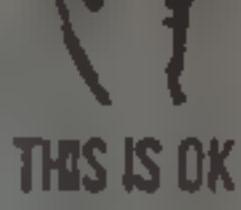
At the time, I didn't know who he was nor did I make the connection that the movie I was set to review was about the same guy.

Now, if you live in the same kind of mindset as Walsch, you'll believe that this was exactly as it should be, that this was not a coincidence.

For those of you who don't know, Walsch is this guy who hit bottom when he was in his late 40s; he lost his belongings in a fire, his marriage failed and he broke his neck in a car accident. He soon found himself living in a small tent city in Oregon, living off of

BIO+PIC

OPENS FRI FEB 16
CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD
DIRECTED BY STEPHEN SIMON
WRITTEN BY NEALE DONALD WALSch,
DOMINIC GARNET
STARRING HENRY CZERNY, VILMA SILVA,
T BRUCE PAGE, ZILLAH GLORY



THIS IS OK



the avails of bottle and can collecting.

Walsch had always been something of a seeker, however, and after writing an angry letter to God, he found that he was getting answers, real tangible answers that he wrote down and which eventually became his first book, *Conversations with God*.

THIS IS THE KIND of movie you really want to like. It's a feel-good tale about overcoming adversity, about being spiritually greedy but not materially, and about opening yourself up to all

that is positive and good about life. Canadian actor Henry Czerny does an admirable job of bringing Walsch to life—considering the many holes in the script and the onscreen action.

It isn't that the film jumps back and forth through time, from Walsch's downtrodden days to his successful career as author and public speaker

and back again. Although he's not particularly artful about it, director Stephen Simon (*Indigo*) understands how well the contrast between the two lives plays out.

But he had wanted to make this film for over a decade, and it seems that perhaps he became over-familiar with the story because many of the

movie's threads get introduced and dropped. Life can definitely be like that, but the film doesn't play it that way, leaving its audience somewhat unsatisfied.

When Walsch first becomes homeless, for instance, he takes a long bus trip, walks to a house in the pouring rain, decides not to knock on the door, but goes into the garage to grab a sleeping bag. Who does this house belong to? We never find out. And what about his four ex-wives and nine children?

Certainly we've all been in similar situations, where things can't always be explained because they are too painful, or to do so would somehow betray the people in our lives, and that's part of what makes Walsch's story compelling.

But I can't seem to get past the fact that it's not in the story that the film fumbles, but in the telling. ▶

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Hannibal needs to bite it

STEVE LILLEBUEN / steve@vneweekly.com

Hannibal Lecter has become so ingrained in pop culture as a symbol of pure evil that there is little a prequel about his childhood evolution into madness can do to make him more terrifying than he already is.

This is an uphill battle *Hannibal Rising* faces before the film even begins. While the prequel is shot beautifully in Eastern Europe and France with only minor problems in slow pacing, the story lacks punch and the level of gore audiences are expecting.

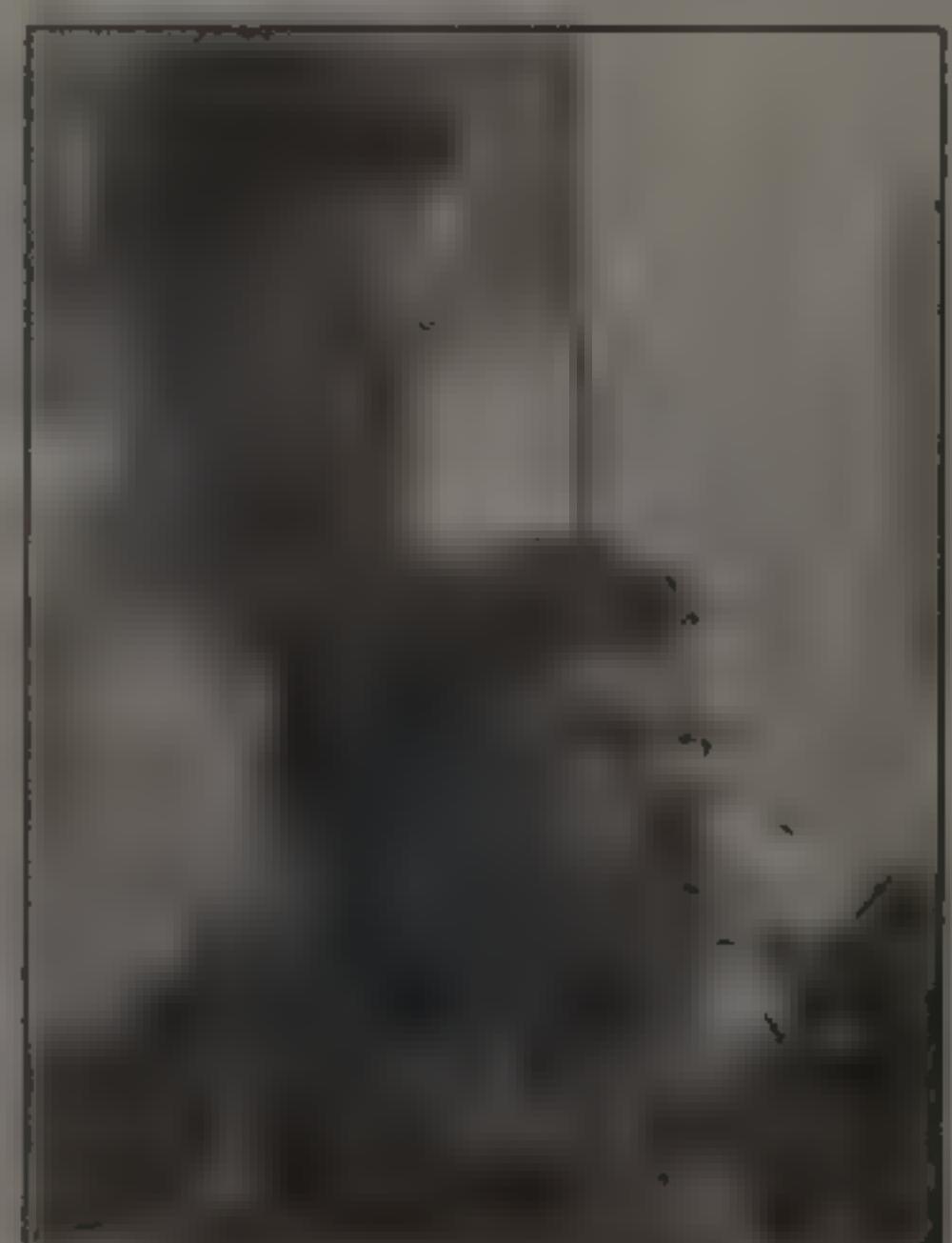
Following Hannibal's early childhood and adolescence, the film tries to explain how these experiences led to his transition from a normal child to a cannibalistic killer.

Growing up in Lithuania, the young Hannibal escapes Hitler's Blitzkrieg in the Second World War by hiding in the family cabin deep in a nearby forest. His parents are soon killed in the crossfire between a Soviet tank and a German bomber, leaving him all alone with his younger sister.

A group of looters arrives to shack up in the hideout, and, upon facing starvation in the dead of winter, they turn to his sister for their next meal. Seeing his sister eaten by the looters renders Hannibal mute, and he later spends years in an orphanage being picked on by bullies and fighting back like a wounded animal.

Eight years later, Hannibal is living with his Aunt (Li Gong) in France, studying medicine during the day and admiring her Japanese heritage in the night. He is fascinated with her samurai swords and armour, practicing

THRILLER
HANNIBAL RISING
DIRECTED BY PETER WEBBER
WRITTEN BY THOMAS MANN
STARRING GASPARD ULLIEL, LI GONG,
DOMINIC WEST



Kendo with her regularly. Then, upon a run-in with the local racist butcher—where he has his first taste of murder—he decides to return to Lithuania as a grown man to kill those responsible for eating his sister.

GASPARD ULLIEL DOES a fine job of portraying Hannibal as a brilliant sociopath. A subplot emerges between a war crime investigator played by Dominic West, and Hannibal, where they develop a close working relationship.

These few scenes are the most interesting—even though the idea itself has been done—as both are fighting for justice, just through different means.

It's not exactly riveting stuff, but it's at least a believable attempt at explaining the childhood of such a cultural icon. The explanation is all just a little cliché, though, isn't it? The script follows a typical formula that rarely leaves the audience surprised or interested.

Nothing Hannibal experienced or did, after all, can be more powerful than our overactive imaginations. *The Silence of the Lambs*, one of several films in the Hannibal series, used the audience's lack of knowledge to generate suspense. Here, having everything spelled out to us is more an exercise in history than mystery or intrigue. ▶

LOTUS CHILD / 35

STINK MITT / 39

SPILL CANVAS / 44

Bourne tips his hat for charity

EDEN MUNRO / eden@vneweekly.com

"I think music is a big part of living," says **Bill Bourne**, his enthusiasm immediately apparent. "It's huge. I think it's a miracle, really. Often music gets sort of marginalized, but what would happen if you took it away? It would be disastrous."

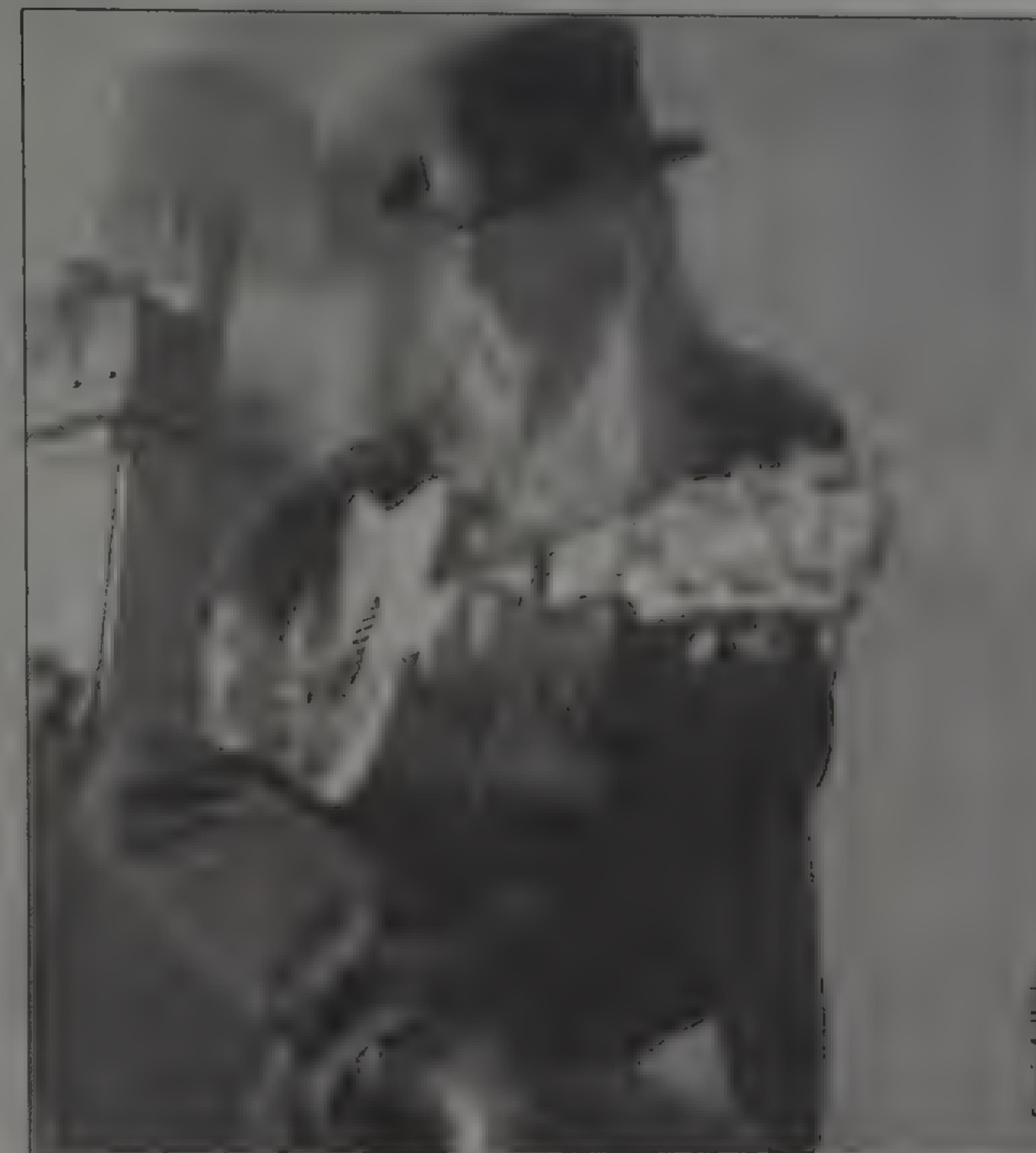
Bourne has always been a busy guy on a local scene that he has watched grow from a single weekly open mic night to several spread throughout Edmonton's venues. His reverence for the power of music—a healing force that he sees as food for the spirit—has led to his involvement in many a local events, from goodwill-inspired fundraisers to pure celebrations of the sound of music.

With *Boon Tang*, his first solo album since 2002, just on the horizon, Bourne is readying himself for a year of serious touring in support of the disc. But he's more than happy to be getting things off the ground right here at home with a Valentine's dance party where he'll perform with some friends for the purpose of raising money for the local charitable group SIRENS (Support for Individuals at Risk in Everybody's Neighbourhood Society).

Bourne appreciates the grassroots nature of the organization, where those involved volunteer their time and effort to raise money in support of five sustainable programs—a breakfast program, an after-school basketball program, a program that sees Derk's providing free tuxedos for graduations to kids who can't afford them, a choir and tuition for kids who come from low income families—with 100 per cent of the money going to the programs rather than administration costs.

WHEN BOURNE TAKES THE STAGE at the benefit, he'll be doing so as both a solo artist and as part of Nerklewerks, a duo consisting of him and his friend Tippy Agogo.

"We do this amazing thing where we just start playing and we have no idea what we're going to do," Bourne chuckles. "We never work anything out, so it's all completely open, and



Francis A. W. Joly

PREVIEW

FRI, FEB 16 (7 PM)

BILL BOURNEWITH NERKLEWORKS, LAURELLE, TACO RIDE
NORTHGATE LIONS RECREATION CENTRE
(7524 - 139 AVENUE), \$20

it's astonishing the things that happen sometimes when we do that."

That sort of free-form approach to music is something that runs through Bourne's work. Even his new album is about a certain feeling, despite having been recorded in bits and pieces over the last couple of years.

"This new album to me, it was all about vibes," he explains. "The title, *Boon Tang*, if you look it up in the dictionary it literally means a fortunate event with a strong flavour, or a blessing with a strong flavour."

Much of Bourne's inspiration for this album came about through the musical relationships he has developed over the last few years with

singers Eivør Pálsdóttir and the singularly named Laurelle, and with 12-year-old flautist Aysha Wills, all of whom appear on the new album.

Bourne's desire to capture the resulting inspiration on tape led to his recording the album at home with his own equipment.

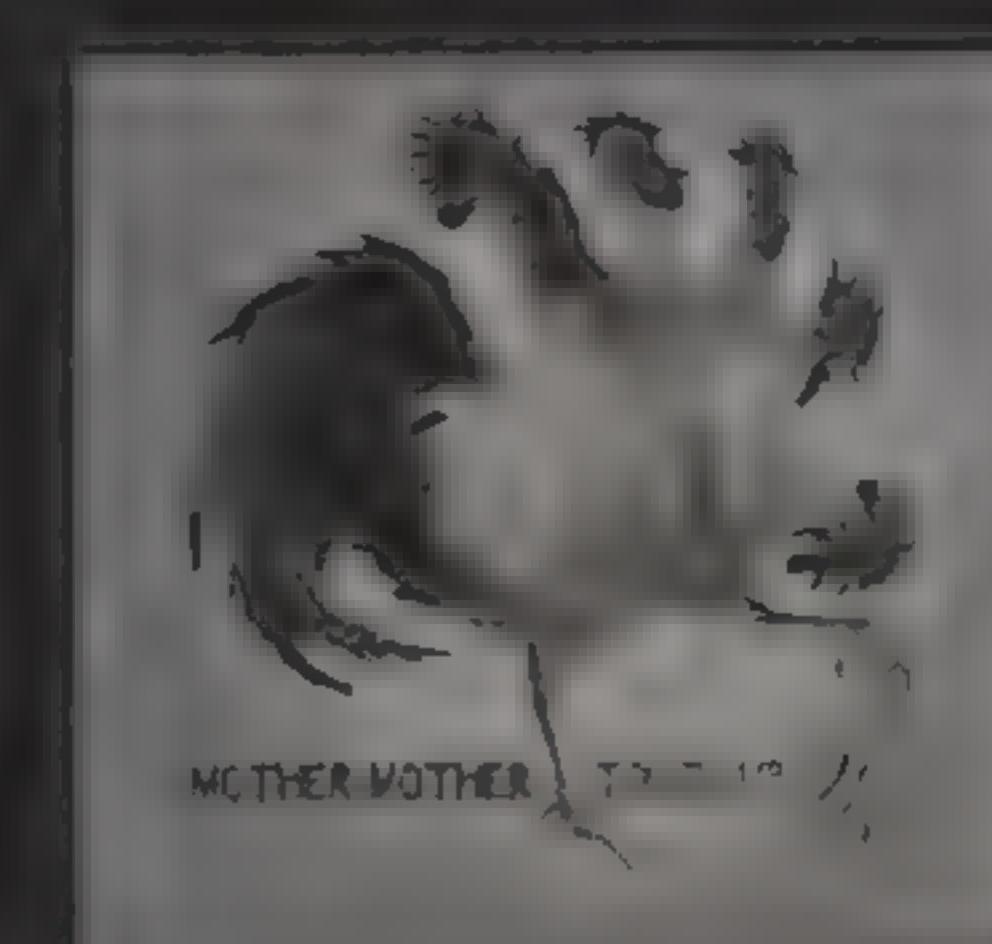
"When you record at home you can sort of pick and choose your moments," he says of the process. "If you're having a really good day, you can turn on the tape deck and wow, you can get some really neat stuff."

"Whereas, in the studio you line up the dates, you book the engineer and you go in and perform and you better be having a good day," he continues. "Otherwise it's gonna cost you a lot of money for nothing, so there's a lot of pressure on that and I don't know how good that pressure is for music. I don't think music is about pressure. Music is about internal joy."

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No Minors



Come east, Lotus Child

DAVID BERRY / david@vneweekly.com

The inscrutable fact of life for burgeoning Western Canadian bands is that their travel schedule is going to suck. Unlike the lucky folks down East, big cities are spaced about one every 400km from Manitoba to BC, leading to a life full of either interminably long road trips or plenty of gigs playing in the shadows of the world's biggest Ukrainian miscellanea.

Either way, though, you're in for long, boring stretches where your only hope for keeping the band together is self-entertainment—enough of it to fill a few weeks at a time, no less. It's an eye-glazing fact of life that Vancouver pop-rockers **Lotus Child** have come face to face with while touring their debut full-length, the catchy, piano-stomping *Gossip Diet*, across the great wide West.

"Really dumb games are all that's keeping this band together some times. When you're in a town where there's nothing to do but go to the Salvation Army, throwing rocks against things or jumping over shit is

PREVIEW

WED. FEB 21 (9 PM)
LOTUS CHILD
WITH CITY VOX
SIDETRACK CAFÉ, \$7

the only thing you can do and still be able to play that night," explains singer/guitarist Zach Gray over the phone from Vancouver, a few days before the band sets off for another trip full of fucking around.

"Actually, our drummer [Miles Bruce] and bassist [Peter Carruthers] are pretty satisfied with the Salvation Army," pipes up fellow singer/pianist Tom Dobrzanski, on the other line. "You can leave them in a thrift store or a record store or something and come back in five hours and they'll still be searching through shit, having a great time. That's pretty nice—it's like free rhythm section babysitting."

OF COURSE, HITTING ON a great way to keep the timekeepers amused is only one of the many benefits of hopping along the small town circuit, according to the singing duo. According to

them, when you spend as much time as they do playing in places that can get as lifeless as Vancouver's stages are known to be, getting out amongst the people who have been throwing rocks and jumping fences all day makes for a better show.

"In the big cities, people are always pretty much looking for something not to like—it's like they go to shows to criticize them, not really enjoy them," explains Dobrzanski, who admits to occasionally leaving his dancing pants at home himself. "But the small towns, they want you to be the best band ever, so that they can say that they were at your show when you stopped in town."

"Edmonton's actually kind of like that, too," adds Gray, intending it as a compliment, as unaware as he is of our city envy. "No one's ever out during the day, you all have jobs or something, but it seems like it means you really want to have fun when you come out."

Good for us, so long as the band can find a way to pass the time without throwing rocks at Manulife Place. ▼

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SAT
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10

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WITH TRIVIUM
TICKETS AT TICKETMASTER
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Gatecrasher

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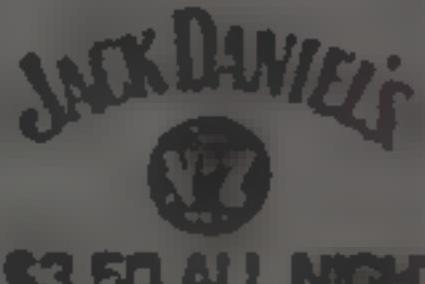
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BLUE CHAIR CAFE Joshua Groppe
8pm, donationsCHRISTIAN'S PARTY PUB
Open stage hosted by Alberta Crude, 6-10pmDRUID Open mic hosted by Chris
Winters every Tue, 8pmDUSTER'S PUB Jam hosted by
Brian PatchFOUR ROOMS Althea Cunningham,
8pmTHE IVORY CLUB Live Dueling
Pianos, no cover, 8pmJAMMERS PUB Thursday open jam;
7-11pmJAZZ WEAR AND GRILL Stage
with The Poster Boys (pop/rock/blues); 8:30pm-12:30amJEFFREY'S CAFE Benefit Concert: Edmonton's Jazz All
Stars, \$20 (proceeds to Millman family)

JULIET'S PLATEAU

KOKO'S GLASS RECREATION CENTRE
ed by the Wild Rose Old Tyme
Fiddlers Society; 7-10pm

KUMAR'S KITCHEN

Benefit Fractal Pattern Fields to
Food, Hills Like White Elephants,
8pm (door), \$10 (adv)/\$12 (door)
advance tickets available at
Megatunes, Blackbyrd, Listen, Sam
Centre at Grant MacEwan CollegeURBAN LOUNGE Apache Rose (CD
release party)

WILD WEST SALOON

YARDBIRD SUITE Big Band Festival

CLASSICAL

BUTTERFIELD'S RECREATION CENTRE
ATRE Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt,
8pm, \$29 (adult/senior)/\$24 (student)
at TIX on the Square

DJ'S

BACKROOM VODKA BAR
Nights: Electro Education dub, trip
hop, lounge electro with DJ LazerBLACKDOG FREEHOUSE
EntertainmentBLACKDOG FREEHOUSE
Thursdays: DJs spin on two levelsBUDDY'S Wet underwear contest
with Mia Fellow, midnight, DJ
WestCoastDaddyESMERALDA'S Big and Rich
Thursday: top 40, countryFEVER NIGHTCLUB
Bingo with DJ S.W.A.G.

FUNKY BUDDHA Requests with DJ Damian

GAS PUMP Ladies Nite: Top
40/dance with DJ ChristianGIGGLE SKY Comedy Club
Thursdays: Urban Substance
Sound Crew, InVinceable,HOTEL LOUNGE ShortRound, SpnCycle, Touch It, Lady
Vicious: Valentine's celebration host-
ed by KwameKAS BAR Urban House, with DJ
Mark Stevens, 9pmNEW CITY I Love '80s, Trash Bingo
hosted by Dexter Nebula, Sushi
Stillett, Belinda Carboni, Heils
Yeah, 9:45 (First Card); no coverTHE STUDIO Dance lessons at 8pm,
Salsa DJ to followTRANSIENT TUESDAY British folk import;
7:30pm, tickets available at Transcend Coffee Bar
and RoasteryURBAN LOUNGE Spoon, Marc Charron, Kris Gleibush,
10pm (door)

WILD WEST SALOON

YARDBIRD SUITE BY GENE
PrestwichRED STAR Femme Fatale rock, pop,
hip hop with DJ KellyTHE ROOST Gorgeous, featuring
hostess Dr. Lexxix Tronic, Drag Kings
and Queens, burlesque and rotating
game shows, bands upstairs monthly

SPORTSWORLD ROLLERSKATING

CONVENTION HALL Convocation Hall,
Shelley Young, Tanya Prochazka (cello), Aaron
Au (violin), Charles Hudelson (clarinet), Sylvia Shadick-Taylor (piano);
8pm; \$20 (adult)/\$15 (student/senior)STOLLS TOP 40, R&B, house with
People's DJSTONEHOUSE PUB Top 40 with DJ
Tysin

TWILIGHT AFTERHOURS Flashback house/hard with Johnny

at TIX on the Square, door

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BACKROOM VODKA BAR Friday: Funky breaks, funky house
funk tunes with Phife and friends

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WILD WEST SALOON

WONDERBAR

CLASSICAL

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(student/senior) at TIX on the Square

BLUE CHAIR CAFE Sunday Brunch
Stringhearts Quartet, donations

WINDSPIRE CENTRE The Beatles Pro Coro Alumni Nathan Berg and John Tessier, with Jeremy Spurgeon (piano), gala benefit recital 7pm, \$30-\$40, reception tickets \$50 available at the Winspear box office

DJS

RACESTAGE LIVE AND GRILL Industry Night with Atomic Improv Jamedek and DJ Tim

THE BANK ULTRA LOUNGE Glam The Juan MacLean, Dusty Grooves, NF star Delano, Luke Morrison, \$15 (adv) at Foothill, Blackbird, Yes! Hair, Treehouse Records, Bamboo Ballroom

BLACKDOG FREEHOUSE Afternoons with Phil Got To Give It Up Main Floor, funk, soul, Motown and disco with DJ Red Dawn; 2-7pm

BUDDY'S NIGHTCLUB Rotating drag shows DJ WestCoastBabyDaddy

FEVER Family Day Long Weekend Markus Schulz, Phil Lam, Dave Deka Upstarts, Vinny Vo and the Sushi Crew Collective, Martin Lounge Darren Stocks, Chris Stocks, Bonne Bracco, Viet

GINGUR SKY Long Weekend Jam with DJ Jizzle and D Block, no minors, 10pm (door), \$10 cover

NEW CITY Rub A Dub Unites Again DJs Jesus and Anarchy Adam (CJSR's Your Weekend AA Meeting), the Simpson's at 9pm

O'BRYNE'S DJ Finnegan, \$9 (door), \$20 (basic)/\$30 (premium), available by phone at 414-6766

SPORTSFIELD Mike McDonald after...

SIDETRACK CAFE Sidetrack Cafe Sunday Night DJ Duleman, 9pm, \$8

STARLINE ROOM Dr. Death Mob with The Devil, Saturday night, 9pm, \$10 (door), \$20

THE STUDIO DJ Shredder, DJ... The Studio

WEBCAST DJ... The Studio

WUNDERBAR Sundays DJ Gallates and XS, guests, no cover

YESTERDAYS David Stone, Tryptomene (Underground guests)

TUE LIVE MUSIC

CENTURY CASINO Ian Mitchell's Bay City Rollers, \$28.95 available at 645-4000

L.B.'S PUB House band, 9:30pm, 1am, no cover

NEW YORK BAGEL CAFE Marco Clavenna (samba to Bolero) every Monday

PLEASANTVIEW COMMUNITY HALL Acoustic Instrumental Old Time Fiddle Jam hosted by the Wild Rose Old Time Fiddlers Society, 7pm

POINTER PLATE Colin Priestner, John Guttae, no minors, 8pm (door), \$10 (adv) at Blackbird, Listen, Megatunes Power Plant, SU Info Booths, TickedMaster

SIDETRACK CAFE Maverick Mondays Open Stage with Ben Spencer, 9pm, no cover

THE STUDIO Fresh Cut of Lime Torrance, 7pm, \$5, fundraiser to keep The Studio open

TAPHOUSE Monday Live with Big Fickle, 8-10:30pm, no cover

DJS

BAR WILD Bar Gone Wild Mondays Service Industry Night, no minors, 9pm-2am

BLACK DOG FREEHOUSE Polar Mondays with DJ Penny Tentary

BUDDY'S Amateur Strip Contest with Mia Fellow, DJ WestCoastBabyDaddy

FILTHY McNASTY'S Mondays with Philip and Bogner

NEW CITY LIKwid LOUNGE Make it Munchie Mondays House with DJ Dusty Grooves, guests

O'BRYNE'S Best local musical talent with DJ Angus

TUE LIVE MUSIC

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Ammar (guitar), 9pm

SHRIMP LUMPSPIKE AVENUE stage with Chris Wynters and guest

EDMONTON EVENTS CENTRE Backberry, Idle Sons, Chunks, no minors, 7pm (door), \$26.50

LEGENDS PUB Open jam hosted by Gary Thomas

SIDETRACK CAFE Carina Hynnn, Jay Gidley, 9pm, \$4 (door)

THE STUDIO Anavrin, Burnin' Sands, Perilous Seas, Quinetus, 7pm, \$5

fundraiser to keep The Studio open

VELVET UNDERGROUND Joey Only Gutlaw Band, guests, 8pm (door), \$1?

YARDBIRD SUITE every Tue, Jerry Duhly, 8:30pm (door), 9pm (show) \$3

DJS

BACKDRAUGHT PUB Tuesdays DJs spin on the main level

BUDDY'S Free pool and tourney, DJ... Around

ESMERALDA'S Top 40, country, R&B with DJ Foreplay, DJ Jimmy

FUNKY BUDDHA (White Ave) Latin and Salsa music, dance lessons 8-11pm

GINGUR SKY Basement Tuesdays Reggae music, no cover all nite

NEW CITY LIKwid LOUNGE The In Kraut Mod R&B, Northern Soul, '60s Garage, Mod Revival with DJ Erick and guests

BUDDY'S Hump day with DJ SexySex

WEDNESDAY Wednesdays

HULBERT'S Wobly Wednesday downtempo, smooth jazz, with DJ Frederick

LEGENDS PUB Hip hop/R&B with DJ Spinycle

NEW CITY LIKwid LOUNGE Wednesdays

WEDNESDAY metal every Wednesday

RED STAR Funk 'n' Soul funk, soul, disco, nu jazz, reggae, hip hop with Cool Curt, Yuri, Junior Brown, Remo

STANDARD Wednesday Gon Wild feature with DJ Nestor Delano

STOLL'S Wild Cherry House/garage with Tripswitch, Resident Funk, fusion with Steve Velocity

WEDNESDAY Indie, Mod, Rock, Electro Dance Party with the Jbots, no cover

LEVEL 2 LOUNGE Open Mic

METRO CLUB AND BILLIARDS The Metro World Beat Band with Enrique

O'BRYNE'S Chris Wynters and friends, 9:30pm, no cover

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And you thought we couldn't work in any more Anna Nicole Smith references ...

TARA ZUROWSKI / tara@vneweekly.com

For those of you who are new to the ribald wonders of Vancouver's **Stinkmitt**, MC Jenni Craige (aka Kaytea Daignault) and MC/DJ Betti Forde (aka Maren Hancock) got together about five years ago and since then the band has come up with their own unique brand of music, combining equal parts Beastie Boys, Blondie and Prince.

The band's catalogue consists of songs with names like "Biker Shorts," "Sloppy Sock," "Camel Toe" and "Marilyn Monroe Sleepover," making you wonder just what sort of raunchy brainstorming sessions are involved in their songwriting.

"The process is a lot of fun," Forde excitedly admits. "We spend all our time joking around. We are funny people. Kaytea's fucking hilarious. When we're around each other making music, we're fuckin' in love with each other."

FORDE PAUSES TO SWALLOW and laugh hysterically before continuing. "Marilyn Monroe Sleepover" got written in like an hour," she throws out. "Bigstuff (aka producer/mixer Greg Campbell) had already done the beat two years ago for something else. Jenni went home and wrote the hook that night, and then we recorded it.

But what of the song's name?



PREVIEW

SAT, FEB 17 (8 PM)
STINKMITT
WITH LAZERSNAKE
VELVET UNDERGROUND, \$10

"Kaytea's friend Mel ... used to do this thing called Marilyn Monroe sleep over," she continues. "They used to drink booze and watch Anna Nicole

Smith movies. Ironic. We actually dedicated that song to her last night at our show 'cause she's fucking dead now.

"'Camel Toe' was my idea," Forde says after another short pause. "It was another thing, like, 'hey, I'm Betti Forde, you're Jenni Craig. We're bangers. And what do bangers have? Camel Toes! And wear biker shorts when it's inappropriate!'" ▶

Photo: David P. Johnson



FEBRUARY 23

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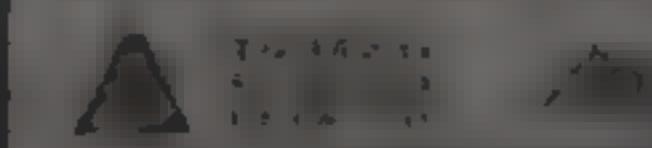
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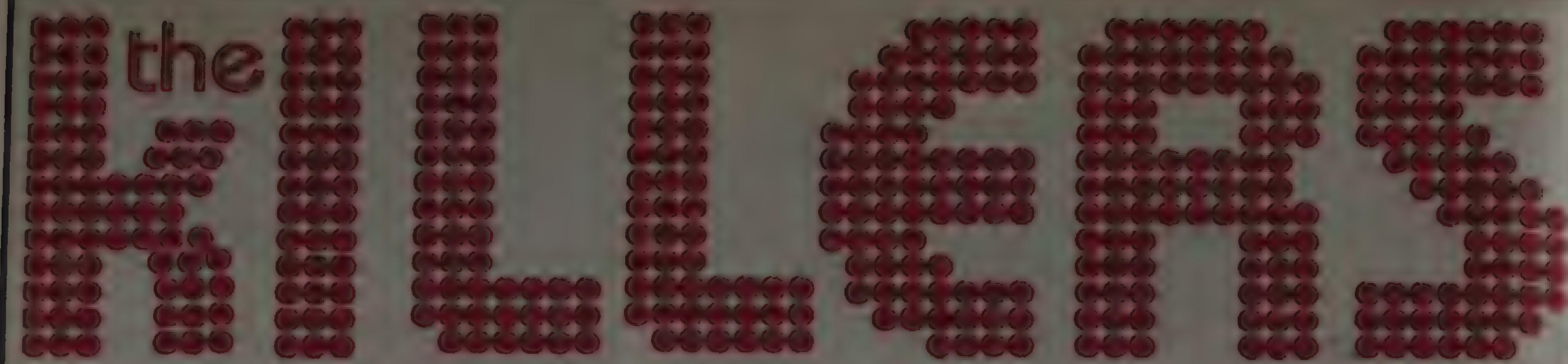
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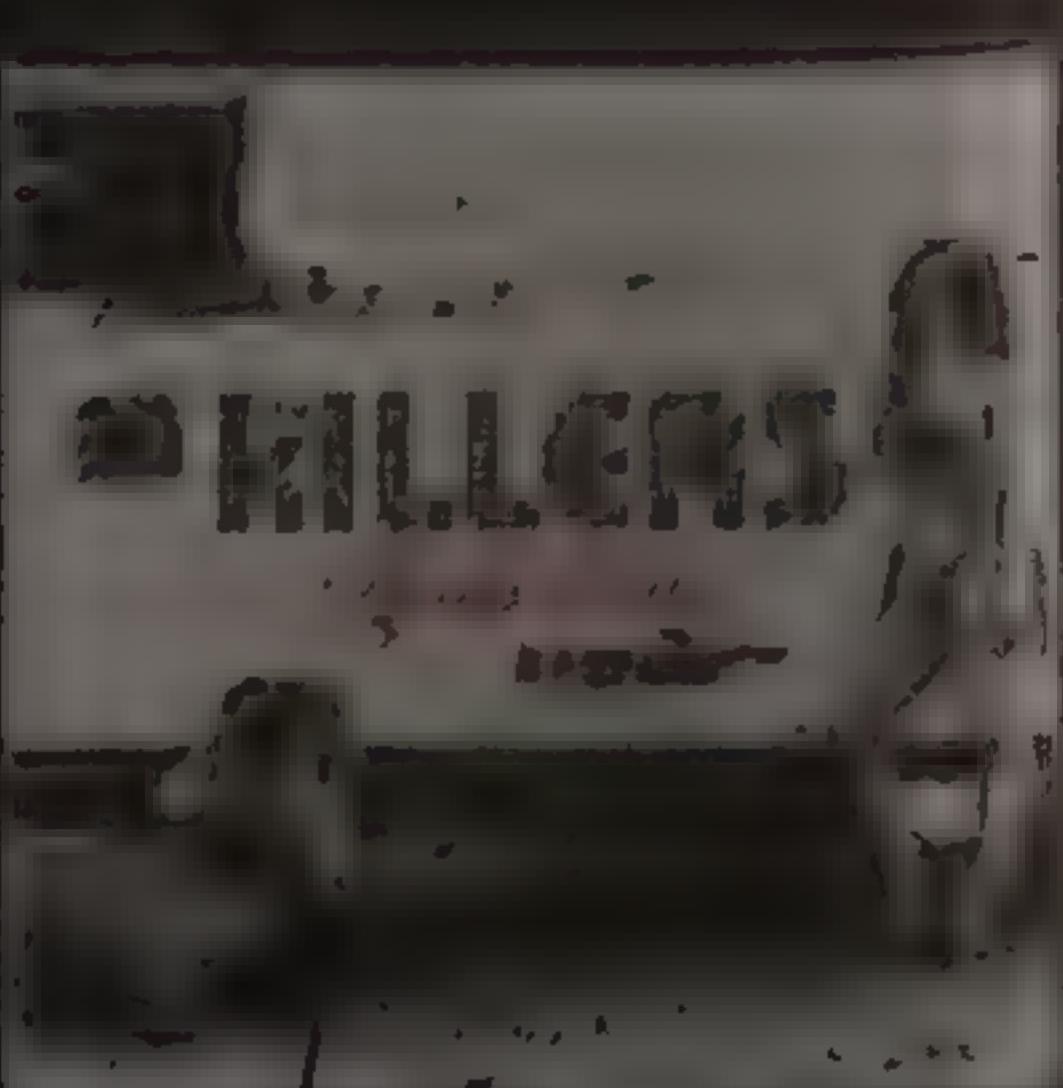
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IN CONCERT

Tenor's tenure extends to Pro Coro's Gala

PREVIEW

SUN, FEB 18 (7 PM)
**PRO CORO CANADA:
GALA BENEFIT RECITAL**
JOHN TESSIER, TENOR
NATHAN BERG, BARITONE
JEREMY SPURGEON, PIANO
WINSPEAR CENTRE, \$30 - \$50

iting artist.

"It's a full-service establishment," he beamed, "and I have many family members here and friends. It's great to have that. If I'm lonely I just call a friend or family member and we go do something."

"It's a bit of a time warp to come back ... you get a lot of memories," Tessier continues, acknowledging the sense of nostalgia invoked by returning to Edmonton and the family home. "[Memories] flood back and it reminds you of what it was like to be a child. It's interesting to reflect on those things."

ASIDE FROM THEIR STATUS as choir alumni, one of the reasons Pro Coro invited two artists like Tessier and Berg to select repertoire and headline at the Gala might be because the singers understand that there is a great world of music and art beyond our city's snow drifts and freezing weather, and many Edmontonians are

willing to brave the elements for a little entertainment.

"If people are going to come and support Pro Coro, my idea was that there would be something for everyone there," Tessier says in regards to the repertoire. "There's a really wide range of music on the program and I think that's a good thing."

The music will range from song cycles by Benjamin Britten, Bizet, the Beatles, Bach and Mahler. The biggest advantage to this concert setting will be seeing two of opera's superstars performing together without the excess costumes and storylines—just an intimate evening of great singing and great music. ▀

SARAH CHAN / sarah@vneweekly.com

He was just here playing Count Almaviva in the Edmonton Opera's production of *The Barber of Seville*, but tenor John Tessier is back this weekend to spend some time with Pro Coro. An alumnus of the choir, Tessier was asked to create a program for Pro Coro's **Gala Benefit Recital** alongside baritone Nathan Berg, another choir alumnus.

Both of these men have gone on to become highly regarded names in the opera industry, where they are featured in recitals and operas all across North America and in Europe.

Tessier was staying at his parents' home during his role in the opera and admits that it was comforting to not be relegated to a sterile hotel room, allowing him to feel instead like a normal human being instead of a vis-

REVUE / FRI, FEB 9 / ROMI MAYES / STARLITE When Romi Mayes rolled into town the day before her gig at the Starlite, she brought her acoustic with her and hunkered down for a little practicing with her pick-up bandmates Tom Murray on bass and Darrek Anderson on guitar and pedal steel. By the time they hit the stage they were still rough around the edges, but that's sort of what you want from someone like Mayes, with her country-infected tunes about the good, the bad and everything in between. But the highlight of the performance was the single song when Mayes borrowed Anderson's electric guitar and stood alone on the stage, grinding out bluesy note after note, matching the heavy grit and distortion of the guitar with the growl of her vocals. Mayes took a chance with that bit, and it paid off, proving that it's moments like that that make music exciting. —EDEN MUNRO / eden@vneweekly.com

MOJO Playlist pick December 2006
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VUEWEEKLY

With drums, organ bass and guitar, one-man-band is an aerial Charron

Touring in Canada can bring a lot of challenges along with it, not the least of which is the weather. Anyone who's been on the road during one of our winters is aware of the fickle nature of the elements.

Marc Charron has been braving the distance between his home in Ottawa and the West Coast for the last couple of weeks, and he readily admits that there have been a few challenges along the way.

"I feel like I've been gone for a month or two and I'm only two weeks in," he says over a payphone somewhere in the wilds, the sound of large trucks threatening to drown him out. "I'm pretty bagged. This winter's crazy. It's just so cold, and I'm alone, too. Last Sunday night they closed Highway 17 just past Sault Ste Marie, so I couldn't leave and I had to be in Revelstoke, British Columbia by Wednesday."

The highway was cleared at 5 am Monday and Charron bolted from the city. Looking back from a couple thousand kilometres down the road, Charron is happy to have made it out of Ontario.

"Even when they reopened it, when I was driving it was still super scary," he recalls. "They were saying that the night before it was so bad that cars were driving into the side of the mountain, off the road because they couldn't see anything. Even in the summertime these roads are bad because you get blinded by whatever, but in the winter, holy Jesus. No time to sleep on the highway in the winter."

WHILE CHARRON has made the trip across the country on his own



PREVIEW

FRI, FEB 16 (8 PM)
MARC CHARRON
WITH RAE SPOON, KRIS GLABUSH
VELVET UNDERGROUND, \$10

before—this is the sixth time in just under two years—he's bringing along substantially more equipment than he did back when he hitchhiked the distance with a backpack and a guitar.

"This is a different gig for me," he laughs. "It's a one-man-band show. I sit with a drum set at my feet—I have a high hat and a snare on my left foot and a kick on my right foot—this organ bass machine that I play with my right hand sometimes and then an acoustic guitar and singing.

"It keeps me in peak physical form,"

he continues. "I don't need to go to the gym anymore. I'm never doing less than three things at once, and then carrying all the gear. I travel pretty heavy ... I drive a Volvo wagon and it's pretty much packed with shit to the rafters."

The physical nature of Charron's self-titled house-folk sound has been taking a physical toll since Charron hit a hidden rock while skiing last week, resulting in a painful limp and an injured back. Still, he's not going to let a little bit of suffering derail his tour, and he's found a way to beat the pain at least momentarily.

"Yeah, it's called ibuprofen ... lots of it," he chuckles. "And then if you have a beer or two everything changes. Things start to swirl in your head." □

HAIKU QUICK SPINS

WHITEY AND TB PLAYER
quickspins@vneweekly.com

THE HILLS THE SOUNDTRACK

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From a show I'll never watch
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All hail PBJ!

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Brooding dudes debuted
On boob tube! Critics conclude
Disc shrewd, ballyhoed

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Does great job trying to seduce
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AQUA LUNG MEMORY MAN RED INK

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Have U2's babies

ZIDANE: A 21ST CENTURY PORTRAIT SOUNDTRACK EELS

No head-butts here
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Tinkle on and on

HARRY CONNICK JR. CHANSON DU VIEUX CARRE MARABOUT

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ARIES (MAR 21 - APR 19)

"Dear Rob: Could you please tell me how I can get the men I like to remove me from the pedestals they put me on? — Over-Idolized Aries." Dear Over-Idolized: Good news! You've entered a phase that will be favourable for shattering naïve projections and unrealistic expectations. You'll also be skilled at escaping neediness that feels like a straitjacket.

TAURUS (APR 20 - MAY 20)

When 46 English scholars completed their translation of the King James Bible in 1610, Taurus writer William Shakespeare was 46 years old. In their version of Psalm 46, the 46th word from the beginning is "shake" and the 46th word from the end is "spear." Coincidence? I think not. Just as it's no accident that a minute ago I finished reading Psalm 46, and am now composing your horoscope for the period that begins February 15, which is the 46th day of the year. As I write, I'm sitting in a cafe located at 46 Cabrillo Highway in Half Moon Bay, CA. The people at the table next to me are celebrating their friend's 46th birthday, and out the window I can see a runway where there's a small plane with a 46 painted on its side. My conclusion? 46 is your lucky number, Taurus, and you're about to harvest about 46 tons of eerily delightful synchronicities.

GEMINI (MAY 21 - JUN 20)

You seem to be suffering, although in an interesting way, from a metaphysical version of jet lag. Maybe it's because you've been stretching your boundaries with such experimental vigour. Or maybe it's because you've been engaging in a form of time-travel, exploring the past and future in your dreams and fantasies. In any case, you can take comfort in the knowledge that the warps and tweaks you're dealing with are the results of your brave choices. Congratulations as well for having churned up the most useful riddles you've had to ponder since you jumped out of your skin last year.

CANCER (JUN 21 - JUL 22)

I expect you'll soon be communing with sore spots and delicate feelings, Cancerian. Allergies may be featured prominently as well—if not the literal kind, then maybe the metaphorical version. People might be extra ticklish, sometimes to the point of irritability. And yet all the squirming will actually be a good sign: it'll mean that one of your most confounding contradictions is close to being resolved. For best results, act decisively at the moment when your vulnerability is most intense.

LEO (JUL 23 - AUG 22)

Imagine this scene. You're really thirsty—so dehydrated that you're feeling faint. Yet here's the weird thing: you're walking along the bank of a wide river that's so clear you could see the bottom if you looked. But you're not looking. In fact, you seem oblivious to the surging force of nature just a few yards away. Up ahead you see a man. As you approach, you see he's holding a glass of water. You run to



How many ways can I say I love thee?

TARA ZUROWSKI / tara@vneweekly.com

"It basically started with me in high school," says South Dakota-born Nick Thomas as he recalls the origins of his band the Spill Canvas.

"I was doing the acoustic thing, just trying to do something that wasn't boring. Three days after graduating, I went out and started touring, booking shows for myself. That was my dream, to play for people and hope they like it."

For the first year of his career, Thomas continued playing solo while a few people would sit in with him. Fast forward through a bunch of line-up changes leading to the group's current incarnation as a foursome.

PREVIEW

FRI, FEB 16 (7 PM)
THE SPILL CANVAS
WITH THE REASON, TEN SECOND EPIC
POWERPLANT, \$16 (ALL AGES)

"It's not as easy as I thought it would be," muses Thomas. "There's not an insane number of people in SD who want to quit what they're doing and tour around the country. It was hard convincing people that this would be a cool thing to try. Luckily, I found three very creative people."

Despite being signed to a major label, Thomas says that they ultimately believe in their music, and they aren't about to sell it out for popularity.

"Our view will always be the same,"

Thomas admits, before allowing that the music does change as the foursome spends more time playing together. "It's different ranging from old stuff to new stuff. Rock 'n' roll, or whatever you want to call it, is such a broad thing. It's so empowering to be able to play that style. We don't like being tied down."

That sentiment holds true in Thomas's lyrical style, too.

"The lyrics are really something that I try to change up," he explains. "For example, a phrase like 'I love you' There are so many ways to say it other than using those three little words. I'm a fan of the oddest ways of saying things. I will tell you I love you a million other ways, before I tell you I hate you. The same goes if I hate you." v

him and beg him to let you drink. He readily agrees. Gratefully, you guzzle the precious liquid, then thank him profusely. As you walk away, he calls after you, "By the way, there's a lot more water over there," and he points to the river. Do you hear him? Do you believe him? Or do you keep walking, hoping to find another man with another glass somewhere up ahead?

VIRGO (AUG 23 - SEP 22)

It's time to take down the "Under Construction" signs and clean up the messes from your works in progress. At least for now, your heart has lost its drive for further renovation and rehabilitation.

Whether you think you're ready or not, then, it's time for a grand re-opening. I suggest you offer free toasters or other incentives to pull in new clients, as well as to coax disaffected old ones into returning. It may also help to put up an "Under New Management" sign.

LIBRA (SEP 23 - OCT 22)

According to *The Onion*, the Catholic Church has abolished the traditional "blessed" status of the meek. The new official story is that the meek shall not inherit the earth. I can't confirm the accuracy of *The Onion*'s report, but it does underscore a point I want to drive home to you in 2007: it'll be a favourable time for you to get tough with the docile, submissive aspects of your own psyche.

Humility's fine; that can stay. But you should take aggressive measures to lose any tendencies you might have to be passive. Capitalize on the fact that events in the coming months will help you tap into reserves of courage that have previously been inaccessible.

SCORPIO (OCT 23 - NOV 21)

"My God, these folks don't know how to love," wrote novelist DH Lawrence. "That's why they love so easily." He certainly wasn't referring to people from your tribe: you Scorpios may find it easy to entertain gusts of lust, but you're too smart about real love to dive casually into its mysteries. You know intimately that no matter how sweet love may sometimes feel, it always has the potential to sweep you into the unpredictable depths and change everything forever. Meditate further on these matters; it'll prepare you for the coming weeks.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV 22 - DEC 21)

You want hot gold secrets to ripen in your dark candy soul? Then here's what you do: Study the ocean's memory for its teachings about moon victories. Extract a fresh green why from the book of storms you dreamed about. When the flowers' clouds soar over your shadow, and when night's funny sky has turned into warm moist roars, you'll know exactly how to look through the sun to the other side of your best fear. (The preceding horoscope may sound crazily lyrical, even poetically feral, but it's a perfect embodiment of the attitude you should cultivate in order to have a successful week.)

CAPRICORN (DEC 22 - JAN 19)

I was watching Oprah's TV show at 2 am. "Take off your shirt and look down," she told me. So I did what she suggested. What she said next, however, revealed that she wasn't actually talking to me. "Eight out of ten women are wearing the wrong bra!" she exclaimed. "Are you?" She then gave tips on how to select an

undergarment that's just right for a woman's shape, size and posture. Watched in perplexed awe. How could so many people be ignorant about such a fundamental thing? Later, while meditating on your astrological omens, I realized there's a comparable phenomenon going on in your world. You're missing something important about one of the basic facts of your life. Please find out what it is.

AQUARIUS (JAN 20 - FEB 18)

In solidarity with eternal flux and in the name of all that's both rowdy and holy, I hereby declare change to be a good thing. Furthermore, in accordance with the astrological omens, I announce that change is especially healthy for you right now. I mean it, Aquarius. Change is not only not a bad thing. It's downright wonderful. So let's rise up bravely, you and I, and proclaim that change is the essential nature of the universe—that it's one of the most prominent and resplendent qualities of God Herself. From now until forevermore, let's agree to celebrate change, to welcome it, to revere it—starting this week. Amen, namasté, blessed be, shalom and hallelujah!

PISCES (FEB 19 - MAR 20)

I believe you're climbing up out of the primordial ooze for the last time. You're done! Never again will you be fully immersed in the stinky depths of hell on earth! Never again will moody despair comprise more than 49 percent of your worldview. From now on, you will be smarter about how to avoid unnecessary pain and misery. You will also be a better escape artist. Now go buy yourself a graduation present. v

EVENTS WEEKLY

FAX YOUR FREE LISTINGS TO 428-2800
OR E-MAIL: LISTINGS@VUEWEEKLY.COM
DEADLINE IS FRIDAY AT 3 PM

CLUBS/LECTURES

BUSINESS—A PHILOSOPHY FOR LIVING SGI Centre, 2nd Fl 10711-107 Ave, email at SGIEdmonton@hotmail.com • Monthly meeting • Wed, Feb. 21 (7:30pm) • Free

CANADIAN NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE 11205-101 St (479-1880) • Basketball, every Mon (5-7pm) • Healing Circle, every Mon (6-8pm) • Roaring, every Mon/Fri (7-9pm), every Tue (5-7pm) • Wellness, every Tue (6-8pm) • Sewing Circle, every Tue (6-8pm) • Bookclub Class, every Wed (6-8pm) • C.N.F.C. Powwow, every Wed (6-8pm) • Hip Hop Class, every Thu (5-7pm) • Cree Class, every Thu (6-8pm) • Hikes and Residency, every Fri (all day) • Safe Using and Harm Reduction, last Fri each month (11am-12pm) • Tobacco Reduction, every Fri (1-2pm) • Drop-in Night, every Fri (6-8pm)

CITIZENS' FORUM ON THE ALBERTA TAR SANDS Allendale Community Hall, 6330-105 A St (988-3992) • Meeting every 2nd Sat (7-8pm) sponsored by the NDEnvironment • \$2

CONVERSATION CAFE Unity of Edmonton Church, 1321-106 Ave • Meeting presented by Rev. Yvonne Racine • Every Tue (1-3pm)

DAVID SUZUKI—IF YOU WERE PRIME MINISTER Horowitz Theatre, SLB, U of A (492-8558) • Your voice matters. Are you voting for the environment? Find out how you can get involved • Sat, Feb. 17 (7:30pm) • \$15/110 (low income) available at Earth's General Store, Amery's Books, Parkland Institute

EDMONTON NATURE CLUB Royal Alberta Museum (473-2540) • Monthly meeting with Dr. Heather Proctor speaking on *Mites Associated with Vertebrates: The Good, the Bad, and the Amazing* • Fri, Feb. 16 (7:30pm) • Free

HISTORIC CHURCHES Queen Alexandra School, 7730-106 St (439-2757) • Presentation by Mary Oakwell • Feb. 27

IMAGES ALBERTA CAMERA CLUB Allendale School, 6415-106 St (489-9776) www.imagesab.ca • Meets every 2nd and 4th Thursday each month featuring presentations, speakers, workshops, outings, monthly and year-end competitions. Photographers of all levels are welcome • \$40 (individual membership)/\$50 (family)/\$20 (full-time student); visitors may attend three times before joining

LUNCH BY THE BOOKS Stanley A. Milner Library • Writing Biography, Pleasures and Challenges, panel discussion with Christine Wiesenthal, Julian McMaster, and I.S. MacLaren • Feb. 25 (12:05-12:50pm) • Free

MEDITATION • Gaden Samten Ling Tibetan Buddhist Meditation Society, 11403-101 St, www.gadensamtenling.org (479-0114) by Khenpo Lobsang Dhamchok; beginner Tue (7pm); intermediate Wed (7pm); advanced Sun (11am-1pm) • **Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual Organization**, 208-10132-105 St, (425-1050) www.bkvsu.org; Raja Yoga Meditation

PARENT TALK (421-1292) Boys and Girls Clubs of Edmonton offers support groups and workshops for parents at various city locations

POSTS AND FORTS ON THE NORTH AMERICAN FUR TRADE 1880-1870 Queen Alexandra School Gym, 7730-106 St (439-2797) • Presentation by Wendy Karsse • Tue, Feb. 27 (7:30pm)

ROAD TO SUCCESS Velvet Underground/Starlite Room, 10030-102 St (428-3372) • Networking Nights • Wed, Feb. 28 • Free (DNA member) (\$5 non-member)

SELF ESTEEM SUPPORT GROUP (496-5930) • For women who are experiencing chaos as a result of a life crisis and who feel isolated • Group meets each week

HYPERTENSION Strathcona Place Senior Centre, Main Lounge (433-5807) • Presentation by Peter Diop • Thu, Mar. 1 (1-2pm) • Pre-register

STANDING FOR PEACE: ENDING THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE Centre for Spiritual Awareness, 7621-101 Ave • Featuring Ann Khanna, international speaker, author, founder of TRF Foundation, Stop Kids from Killing Kids • Wed, Feb. 28 (7pm) • By donation

STEPHEN LEWIS AND AVI LEWIS Shaw Conference Centre (651-5000) • Presentation of one family's quest for social change • Tue, Mar. 6 (7pm) • \$75 at TicketMaster

TOASTMASTERS CLUBS • City Lights Toastmasters Downtown (426-5882) Set your own pace to become a comfortable and confident public speaker; meetings every Tues (noon) • Chamber Toastmasters Club (780) 459-5205; Visit us and learn how to deliver effective presentations, conduct business meetings, and develop as a communicator and a leader; every Thu (6pm) • **W'orators**: Beverly United Church meeting room, 11919-40 St (476-6963)

Improve speaking skills, leadership skills, time management, organizational, listening and social skills; every Wed (7-8pm) • **Passions**: Best Western Cedars Park Inn, 5116 Gateway Boulevard (457-0808) www.passions.org; weekly meetings to improve your communication and leadership skills in a supportive environment; every Wed (7-8pm)

TOOKER TALES AND BIG PHARMA Rivardale Hall, 9231-100 Ave (414-6882) • Honour the 300 year anniversary of Tooker's pastries and the 40 years of his life, performance by Dale Latouche, presentation by Brian Mason. Also screening of the new documentary *Big Bucks Big Pharma* • Mon, Feb. 19 (7:30pm) • Free

TOURETTE SYNDROME Academy of King Edward, 8525-101 St, North door (414-866-024-9764) • Support meetings for TS adults and parents of TS kids • First Wed each month

WASKASHEAN TRAIL ASSOCIATION (468-4331) • Free guided hike/ski, approx. 11 km at Gold Bar Park. Meet by the Gold Bar Park parking lot at 10am • Fri, Feb. 18

WOMEN IN BLACK In front of the Old Strathcona Farmers' Market • Silent vigil every 1st and 3rd Sat ea month, stand in silence for a world without violence (10-11am) • Sat, Feb. 17 (10-11am)

WOMEN'S MEMORIAL MARCH Canadian Native Friendship Centre, 11205-101 St • March (45 min-1hr), then congregate over soup, sandwiches and coffee back at the Centre • Feb. 14 (7pm)

QUEER LISTINGS

AGAPE Faculty of Education, U of A Campus • Sex, sexual, gender differences in education and culture focus group • Contact Dr. Andie Grace (andie.grace@ualberta.ca) for info

GENERAL WOMEN'S COFFEE GROUP http://groups.yahoo.com/group/luedmonton • Social group for bi-

campus and regional women • 2nd Thu eve monthly (4pm) **BOOTS AND SADDLES** 10242-106 St (423-5014) • Large tavern with pool tables, restaurant, shows, Members only

BUDDY'S NITE CLUB 11725 Jasper Ave (488-7736) • Open nightly 9pm-3am, Fri 8pm-3pm • Sun: Rotating drag shows with Mt. Bianca and Mt. Vanity Fair in The Stardust Lounge and GoDiva and Donatella NE1 in The Godinne Show, DJ WestCoastBabyDaddy • Mon: Amateur strip contest with Mia Fellow, midnight, DJ WestCoastBabyDaddy • Tue: Free pool and tourney, DJ Arrowchaser • Wed: Hump day with DJ Sexyey Sean • Thu: Wet underwear contest with Mia Fellow, midnight, DJ WestCoastBabyDaddy • Fri: We made 'em famous DJ Eddy, Toonflash, come early to avoid lineup, no cover before 10pm • Sat: Undie night for men only, free pool and tourney, DJ Arrowchaser • Sun: Free

DOWN UNDER MEN'S BATH HOUSE 12224 Jasper Ave (482-7980) • Open 24/7 • www.gaysedmonton.com

EDMONTON MUSIC NIGHT • A mature social group, couples and singles welcome • E-mail edmontonmusicnight@hotmail.com

EDMONTON RAINBOW BUSINESS ASSOCIATION www.edmontonrainbow.org • Monthly after business mixer; Network and share contacts in the GLBT business community • Second Wed ea month

HIV NETWORK OF EDMONTON SOCIETY 300, 11456 Jasper Ave (488-5742) or contact7@hivedmonton.com • Programs and support services for people affected and infected by HIV/AIDS and related illnesses. Counselling, referrals, support groups, harm reduction, education, advocacy and public awareness campaigns

ILLUSIONS SOCIAL CLUB Root, 10345-104 St (387-3343) • Crossdressers, transsexuals, friends and supporters meet the 2nd Thu each month (8pm); http://groups.yahoo.com/group/edmonton_illusions/

INSIDE/OUT U of A Campus • Campus-based organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified and queer (LGBTQ) faculty, graduate student, academic, straight allies and support staff • 3rd Thu ea month (fall/winter terms); Speakers Series. Contact Kris (kwellis@ualberta.ca)

LIVING POSITIVE 404, 10408-124 St, www.edmlivngpositive.ca (1-877-975-9448/488-5768) • Providing confidential peer support to people living with HIV • Every Tue (7-8pm); Support group • Daily drop-in, peer counselling

MADELINE SANAM FOUNDATION 2nd fl, 126-127 106 St (426-1061) Marie-Anne Gaboury (91 St) Rim 3-18 (490-7332) • Program for HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and harm reduction in French, English and other African languages • Every 3rd and 4th Sat (8am-5pm) • Free (member/\$10 (membership) • Pre-register

MAKING WAVES SWIMMING CLUB www.geocities.com/makingwaves_edm • Recreational and competitive swimming with coaching, beginners encouraged to participate. Socializing after practices • Every Tue and Thu

PRIDE CENTRE OF EDMONTON 9540-111 Ave (488-3234) • Open Mon-Thur 1pm-10pm, Fri 3-10pm • Bears Movie Night: Bears Club; last Sun ea month (1-5pm, TV room) • Trans Education/Support Group: Support and education for transsexual, transgender, intersex, two-spirited and questioning individuals; 1st, 3rd, last Sun ea month (2-4pm) with Cody • Sunday Night Men's Discussion Group: Mens social and discussion group; every Sun (7pm); Rob Wells at robwells780@hotmail.com • Friends and Family Playgroup: 2nd Sun ea month (2-4pm) with Noelle, friend-and-family-playgroup-owner@yahoo-groups.ca • Monday Movie Night: Movie nights with themed movies and discussion afterwards; every Mon • TTQ Alliance: Support meeting for transgender, transsexual, intersex and questioning 2nd Tue ea month; ttqalliance@shaw.ca, 718-1412 • GLBT Seniors Drop-in: Every Thu (2-4pm) with Jeff Boeve, 488-3234 • Sick and tired of being sick and tired? Cocaine Anonymous meeting, Thu 7-8pm; CA Hotline 425-2715 • HIV Outreach: Drop-in circle every other Thu (7pm) • Youth Understanding Youth: Support and social group; every Sat (7-9pm); yuy@shaw.ca, www.members.shaw.ca/yuy • Surf Up and Show Up-Big Bonk Study: Sat (12-2); surupshowup@hotmail.com • NLP LGBT Caucus: last Sun ea month with Jay, 488-3234

PRISM BAR AND GRILL 10524-101 St, back entrance (990-0038) • Lesbian and gay bar/restaurant

THE ROOST 10345-104 St (426-3150) • Open Thu, Sun 8pm-3am; Fri Sat 8pm-4am; closed Mon, Tue, Wed • Thu: Thursdays are Gorgeous with Hostess Hootie McBoob, featuring Drag Kings and Queens, burlesque and amateur strip the last Thu ea Month • Fri: All Request Dance Party every Friday, DJ Jazzy with rotating shows every week • Sat: Always like New Years Eve: with DJ Dan (retro) downstairs and DJ Jazzy (new music) upstairs • Sun: Flashback Sundays: Featuring hostesses Miss Bianca and Vanity Fair, rotating guests. Free pool all night long, \$3 cover • Weekends: \$4 (members)/\$6 (non-member)/Sun \$2 cover

SINGLE LESBIANS 40 PLUS • A woman's social group, gathers once a month on Sat for conversation over tea and coffee • Information e-mail: singlewomen40plus@hotmail.com

STEAMWORKS 11745 Jasper Ave (451-5554) • Steam baths open daily (24hrs)

WOODYS 11723 Jasper Ave (488-6557) • Open Daily (noon) • Sat-Tue Karaoke with Tizzy and Patrick • Sat-Sun Pool Tournaments

SPECIAL EVENTS

DESSERT GALA Highlands Golf Club (702-4164) • Fundraiser for the Canadian Red Cross semi-formal or business attire (no denim) featuring speaker Sheldon Kennedy, live entertainment, a silent auction and more • Fri, Mar. 2 (7-11pm) • \$50

EAST MEETS WEST: FROM THE SAMOAS TO THE MILLE Gradel MacLab Theatre (415-5211) • Dance theatre production presented by Movements: The Afro-Caribbean Dance Ensemble • Sat, Feb. 24 (8pm) • \$25

FILM FESTIVAL Marcus Garvey Centre for Unity 12526-126 Ave (423-5262) • Presented by JANNA Edmonton; part of Black History Month • Fri, Feb. 23

GASSING UP THE TAR SANDS—GHOSTS OF FUTURES PAST: TOM BERGER IN THE NORTH Stanley Milner Library, 7 Sir Winston Churchill Sq (439-1160) • The costs of using the Mackenzie Gas Pipeline to Fuel Alberta's Tar Sands. Film screening and panel discussion presented by the Sierra Club of Canada featuring speakers Stephen Hazell, Mark Anielski, and representatives of Northern First Nations • Mon, Feb. 26 (6:30pm)

TOOKER TALES AND BIG PHARMA Rivardale Hall, 9231-100 Ave (414-6882) • Honour the 300 year anniversary of Tooker's pastries and the 40 years of his life, performance by Dale Latouche, presentation by Brian Mason. Also screening of the new documentary *Big Bucks Big Pharma* • Mon, Feb. 19 (7:30pm) • Free

TOURETTE SYNDROME Academy of King Edward, 8525-101 St, North door (414-866-024-9764) • Support meetings for TS adults and parents of TS kids • First Wed each month

WASKASHEAN TRAIL ASSOCIATION (468-4331) • Free guided hike/ski, approx. 11 km at Gold Bar Park. Meet by the Gold Bar Park parking lot at 10am • Fri, Feb. 18

WOMEN IN BLACK In front of the Old Strathcona Farmers' Market • Silent vigil every 1st and 3rd Sat ea month, stand in silence for a world without violence (10-11am) • Sat, Feb. 17 (10-11am)

WOMEN'S MEMORIAL MARCH Canadian Native Friendship Centre, 11205-101 St • March (45 min-1hr), then congregate over soup, sandwiches and coffee back at the Centre • Feb. 14 (7pm)

Chinese (Mandarin) Bilingual Program • Feb. 24 (Elementary Session: 1-2:30pm; Junior/Senior High Session: 3-5pm) • \$12 (per session) available at Asia Books. Only Pages Books, www.asiabooks.org

NIGHTWORKS IN THE PARK Hawrelak Park (454-9203) • A sound and light show with throat singing with Tanya Tagaq Girls, snow screen projections and a fire show with stilt performer Randall Fraser and performance by Asain Contemporary Aboriginal Women's Trio • Sat, Feb. 17 (4 pm)

ORCHID ESCAPE MacEwan College South Campus, 7319-29 Ave (456-1336) • Orchid Society of Alberta 30th anniversary show, featuring hundreds of exotic orchids • Feb. 23-25 • \$6 (adult)/\$3 (student/junior/free (child 12 and under) • Jean Haas discusses Orchids in Holistic Therapy, Sat, Feb. 24 (2pm) • Presentations on all angles of orchid care, for beginners, experts, window sill and greenhouse growers Sat-Sun (11am)

PSYCHIC FAIR Westwood Unitarian Church, 11135-65 Ave (457-9862) • A new age psychic fair. Fundraiser supporting Alberta's Pagans Community, hosted by PanFest, • \$2 admission, \$10 (per divination service) • Feb. 17 (noon-5pm door)

REGGAEON ZIA-A VALENTINE'S AFFAIR Bambole Latin Lounge, 9221-34 Ave • With Cuzmo DJ Myrtille, Eric V., and Los Playaz • Fri, Feb. 16 • \$15 (adult), more day, www.bambole.ca

SILVER SKATE FESTIVAL Hawrelak Park (454-9203) • A celebration of winter featuring winter activities for all ages, including a snow sculpture competition and Nightworks; a sound and light show at sunset • Sat, Feb. 17 (1-18) • Free

TASTE OF AFRICA AND CARIBBEAN Marcus Garvey Centre for Unity, 12526-126 Ave (425-0319) • Food, arts, steel drums, dominoes, African drummers and more; part of the Black History Month • Sat, Feb. 17 (2-10pm) • \$5 (adult)/\$2 (child 7-12)/free (child 6 and under)

VASCARIA'S DANCE PARTY Northgate Lions Recreation Centre, 7524-139 Ave • Benefit for S.I.R.E.N.S. with Nerkelarts, Laurelle, and Teacy Ride, and Bill Bourne • Feb. 16 • \$20 at TicketMaster, benefit for S.I.R.E.N.S.

WELCOME TO THE REEL WORLD—A STATE OF MIND U of A Campus, CEB 325 (Behind CAB), U of A, www.international.ultra-arts.ca/globaled_events.php?id=201 • Documentary followed by a Q and A period with Wieran Jiang • Feb. 27 • Free

WEST AFRICAN MUSIC ENSEMBLE: DRUMS AND DANCES Whitemud Crossing Library, 4211-106 St (496-1822) • Traditional music and dance of the Ewe people of Ghana, Togo, and Benin, performed by the West African Music Ensemble from the U of A • Sat, Feb. 17 (1pm) • Free

KARAOKE

BAR-B-BAR 4249-23 Ave (461-2244) • Every Thu and Sat (9pm); James, Mr. Entertainment • Every Sun (7pm); James, Mr. Entertainment

BILLY BOB'S SPORTS BAR Continental Inn, Stony Plain Rd (484-7751) • Every Wed (8pm-12am); every Thu, Sat (9:30pm-1:30am) with Right Said Ed

CAMELOT SPORTS BAR 10231-95 St (425-4298) • Every Sun (8pm-12); with Jeannie and Bruce

CASTLEDOWN'S PUB 16753-100 St • Every Tue (9pm-1am

ADS! CLASSIFIEDS

IF YOU WANT TO PLACE YOUR CLASSIFIED AD IN VUE WEEKLY, PLEASE PHONE 426-1996.
DEADLINE IS NOON THE TUESDAY BEFORE PUBLICATION

AUDITIONS

Century Dinner Theatre is now holding auditions for its spring show. Please e-mail: audition@shaw.ca to make an appointment.

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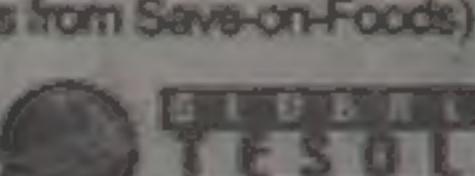
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the_darkness_within_movie@hotmail.com

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Artsy Mum, a collective of emerging artists with children, wants you! Share inspiration and childcare! artsymum@gmail.com

Cartoon Writers looking for Project.
Will work for free. 965-6679.

FREE SAT ART DEMOS for all ages. No experience nec. Watch artists while they work. Mini-topics are for the curious, beginners, teachers, and hobby artists. Mar. 2: Soft Pastels with David Shikoly; Mar. 10: Silk Painting with Helen Le Roux. The Paint Spot, 12418-102 Ave, noon-3 pm. Ph 447-4551, www.paintspot.ca.

Film and Video Arts Society: Register now for Video Kitchen, learn the basics of video production. For info visit www.fava.ca or call 429-1671.

Call to Enter: **ArtsLab Studio Gallery** features guest artists. Incl: Proposal; 10 slides/photos; CV; Artist statement. For info Ph Tim 423-2966.

NEXTFEST is now accepting applications for the visual arts. **Deadline March 15** contact nextfestsarts@gmail.com for more info

ESPA is seeking a part-time website administrator (PAID), 5 hrs/mo to perform basic web updates. contact@edmontonsmallpress.org for more info.

MUSICIANS

Looking for skilled drummer, guitar, and bass for experimental artistic hard core project. Ryan @ 934-4996.

Open Auditions: every Thursday evening, 8pm-12am at THE IVORY CLUB 2940 Calgary Trail, Edmonton's only Dueling Piano Bar. For info Ph Tim @ 904-7455.

Smokin' bass player available for band/fill-ins. Young, neat appearance, excellent gear. All styles of music. Rod 405-4702.

Songwriter seeks to collaborate w/vocalist male/female. Covers and originals. 405-4702.

The Good Samaritan Society (A Lutheran Social Service Organization) is a faith-based, not-for-profit organization. We have a 55-year history providing complex care, assisted living and other specialized services and facilities in innovative and caring environments. We are committed to and constantly strive to provide a quality of care that will enable the elderly and the physically and mentally challenged to experience an optimum quality of life. In the spirit of Christian Hospitality, we serve those in need or at risk, regardless of race or religious belief.

We are currently inviting applications for:

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As part of the TeleCare Emergency Response Center team you will enjoy meaningful employment serving seniors, people with disabilities or people working alone. You are a well-organized individual who pays high attention to detail (i.e. data entry), and have good multi-tasking skills. You have excellent problem solving abilities with some technical aptitude and experience with MS Office and customer database applications. Experience with a switchboard or answering service is an asset. It is essential that you are flexible to work other shifts if required.

Apply with resume by March 1, 2007 at 4:00 p.m. quoting Competition #TC.07.004 to:



The Good Samaritan Society, Attn: Human Resources
8861 – 75 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T6C 4G8
fax: (780) 431-3795 email: careers@gss.org

A current and clear Criminal Records Check is required for all new employees. We thank all applicants, but only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

The Good Samaritan Society is an equal opportunity employer and encourages applications from all qualified individuals.

Visit our website www.gss.org for more details.

Support the Youth Emergency Shelter Society
Call 468-7070 to donate today—and help YESS fulfill their mission of giving youth at risk a chance!

Movements Dance needs behind-the-scenes volunteers for a Feb. 24 performance at the Citadel. Contact Brett 415-5211.

HipHopeYouth Group: looking for creative, leaders who want to learn more about liver health. Computer designers, health promoters, public speakers are welcome, we will provide mentoring. Ph Melissa 444-1547

Volunteers needed to assist with homework for school aged immigrants. NE location. Mon & Thu 6-8pm/Sat 10-12pm and 3-5pm. Great Experience! Call Judy 424-3545 ext 249.

Volunteer Drivers needed for the Seniors Volunteer Driving Centre, 2-3 hrs Mon-Fri. Ph Anna 732-1221.

Want to make a difference in someone's life? Teach an adult to read and write. We are always looking for tutors in your area. Contact the **Centre for Family Literacy** 421-7323 or find us online at www.familyliteracy.ca

Edmonton Community Adult Learning Association is recruiting volunteers for the Board of Directors. www.ecala.org for info.

Help to broadcast news for blind and print-restricted Edmontonians. Email: edmonton@voicewritercanada.com, or call 451-8331.

Become a distress line volunteer. The Support Network, 732-6648. www.thesupportnetwork.com

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A little gentle guidance goes along way

ADVICE ALT.SEX.COLUMN

ANDREA HEMERSON
altsex@altsexcolumn.com

DEAR ANDREA

Most of the sex I've had with my girlfriend has been pretty bad, all because of my stupid brain. I go back and forth between impotence and premature ejaculation.

Initially I thought it was physical, but it's more and more evident that it is primarily a mental thing. If I'm confident and stay in the moment everything goes well and lasts more than long enough for us both to be happy. If I think, "what if my boner goes away?" it usually goes away. If I stress that the sex is going to be bad and my girlfriend is going to be unsatisfied, I usually come too quickly.

You know how if someone says, "Don't think about elephants," all you can think about is elephants? Yeah, well this is the same idea. I've looked into

counselling and hypnotherapy, but they are expensive and I'm broke. Can you offer any advice?

LOVE, MIND BENDING SEX, BUT NOT THE GOOD KIND

DEAR KIND

You are such a classic case of the classic performance dysfunctions (performance anxiety and "spectatoring") that I immediately thought of the classic researchers and writers on the subject.

On my way to getting you some links to Masters and Johnson and Helen Singer Kaplan, though, I was distracted by a book called *You Can Be Your Own Sex Therapist*. This one I haven't read, or even seen, but I like the title and appreciate the sentiment. (Felled by godawful neck pain, I eschewed chiropractic, acupuncture and conventional medicine, and went the DIY route with a foam pillow and a book called *Heal Your Own Neck*. I also like and often recommend *The New Male Sexuality*, by the unfortu-

nately late Bernie Zilbergeld, PhD.

If you could afford to see a sex therapist, chances are s/he would introduce you to the concept of "sensate focus," exercises designed to encourage you and your partner to give and receive touch for its own sake, without getting all goal-oriented about erection or orgasm. S/he would help you identify what is distracting you and coach you through learning to stay present and enjoy what's actually happening instead of projecting your anxieties into the uncomfortable near future. See if there's such a clinic handy and if you can afford some sessions with an intern (don't worry; they're supervised) and if that doesn't seem feasible, get a book and do it yourself. Your dysfunction is super normal, if that makes sense. It should be super fixable, too.

LOVE, ANDREA

DEAR ANDREA

My boyfriend is 18 and less sexually

experienced than I am. I find myself constantly spelling out to him what to do. I can see how this could occasionally be erotic, but we're both getting frustrated. He doesn't seem to be learning very fast how to satisfy me. Worse, I'm taking antidepressants and one of the side effects is delayed orgasm. Is it fair for me to expect more effort from him? Should I just accept that sex is going to be mediocre for a while?

LOVE, FOOT-TAPPING

DEAR FOOT

Is that an until-I'm-off-the-pills while or an until-my-boyfriend-shapes-up while?

Sex educators are forever bugging people to communicate more or better during sex. "Tell him what you want!" they urge. "He can't read your mind." I say it too, of course, but I also often imagine an outcome much like yours: two essentially unsuited people endlessly nagging each other (or one nagging the

other, whichever) to do it a little harder, slower, longer or better. Helpful suggestions are all very well (vital, actually), but if there's no spark, you're not going to ignite one by rubbing two things together until everybody's exhausted and dispirited, now are you?

I don't mean to say you should give up right now. You should talk to him sometime when he isn't down there grinding away in whatever dull and vaguely irritating way he's grinding, and don't tell him you need to talk to him about how lousy he is in the sack, either—raise it as a communication issue and see how that goes. Then you can give up.

I should caution you, however, against making it his problem that you are experiencing some extremely common but regrettable side effects of medication. That is not his fault, any more than being so tragically young is his fault. Both will get better with time.

LOVE, ANDREA

VOLUNTEER

SEEKING musicians, literary and visual artists for the U of A Hospital's **Artist on the Wards** volunteer program. Must have formal experience/training and be able to commit 2-3 hrs/wk for 6 consecutive months. For information or to book an interview, please call 407-8428.

Edmonton May Week Labour Arts Festival: Looking for volunteers to help with the planning and presentation of events, outreach and fundraising. www.mayweek.ab.ca for info.

Have you ever lost a pet? **The Pet Therapy Society** is looking for a Group Facilitator for our pet loss support group. Deanna, 413-4682.

Do you like to drive your own car in Edm? We pay the gas! To be appreciated, call Seniors Vol. Driving for more information at 732-1221.

Leisure Companions: Assist adults with intellectual disabilities to participate in leisure activities in their homes or in the community. Flexible hours. Various Edmonton locations. Lily @ 432-1137.

CNIB is looking for volunteers with vision, adults (50+) to help seniors with vision loss. For more info call Catherine 453-8304.

Do You Know Someone Who Has Diabetes? Help find a cure. Volunteers are required for various fundraising events for the Alberta Diabetes Foundation. Ph Alberta Diabetes Foundation at 780-447-1451; e-mail: events@afdr.ab.ca; www.afdr.ab.ca

Volunteers needed to assist newcomers with pronunciation and grammar in a conversation circle setting. Various library locations. Weekdays/Sat. aft. Call Judy 424-3545 ext 249.

If you enjoy **working in an office environment and speaking with seniors**, this is a great opportunity to help us out only one day a week. Call 732-1221.

Volunteers needed to teach classroom English to adult immigrants. Downtown. Flexible day/evening 3-4hrs/wk. Ph Judy 424-3545 ext 249.

Canadians for Kyoto; meet every Sun at 2pm downtown at the 2nd Cup Coffee Shop, Stanley Milner Library. Volunteer for the upcoming rally. e-mail: climatechangedmonton@hotmail.com

Volunteers needed to teach simple Canadian recipes to newly arrived immigrants. Capilano/downtown. Saturdays 11-1pm, or every 3rd Thu 6-8pm. Ph Judy 424-3545 ext 249.

Volunteer for a more just society for immigrants and refugees. www.multiculturalcoalition.ca or call Janina 423-1973.

Volunteer to Strathcona Place Senior Citizen Centre Outreach Program. Ph Jo Royal 433-5808.

Volunteers needed to assist newcomers in completing their 2006 tax returns. Sat mornings beginning March. Training provided. Ph Judy 424-3545 ext 249.

Had Enough?
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